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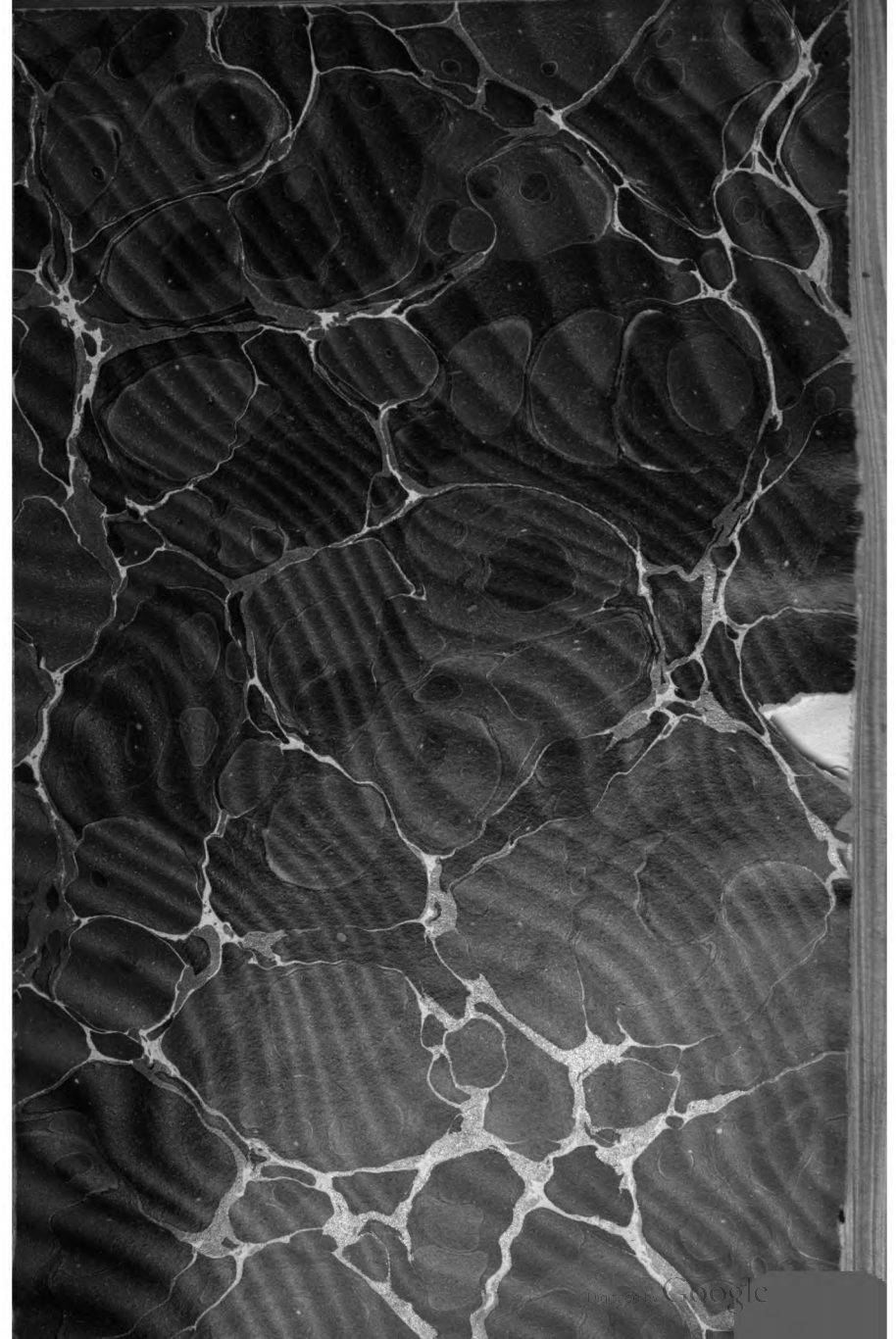
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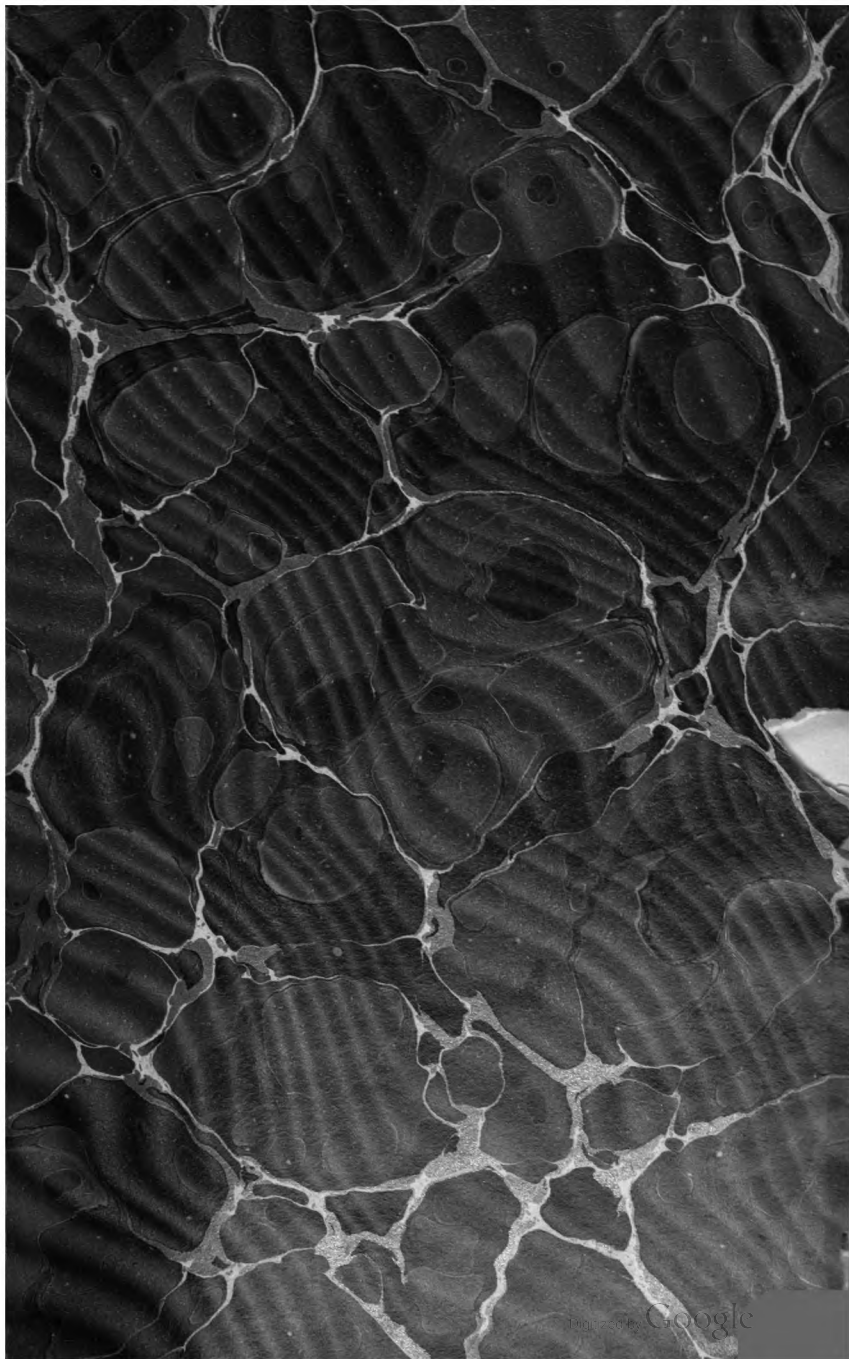


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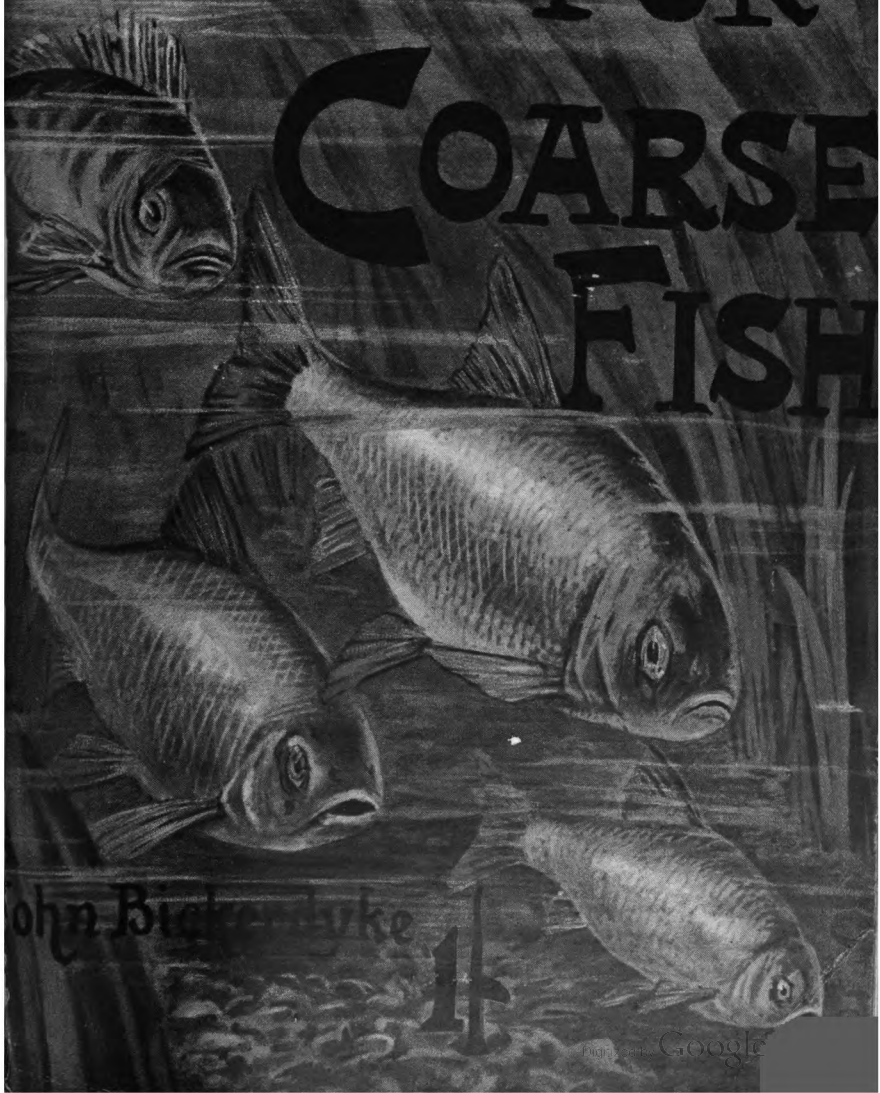


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NEWPORT R.I.

PAID Feb. 1899



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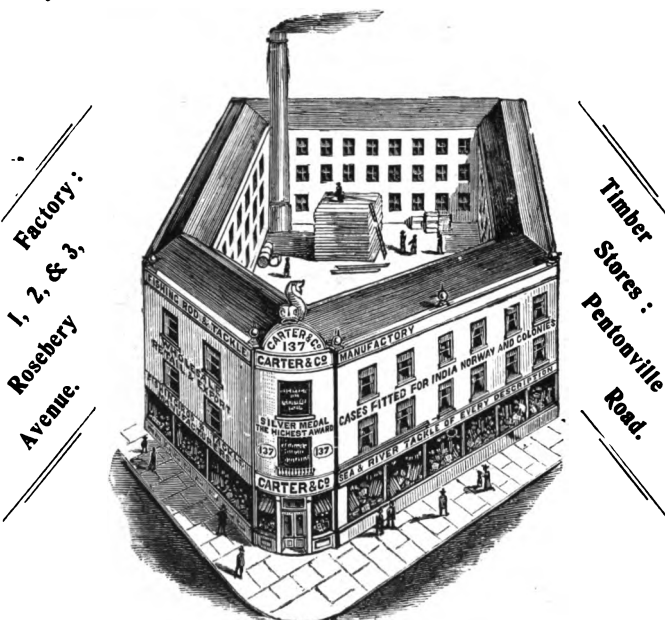
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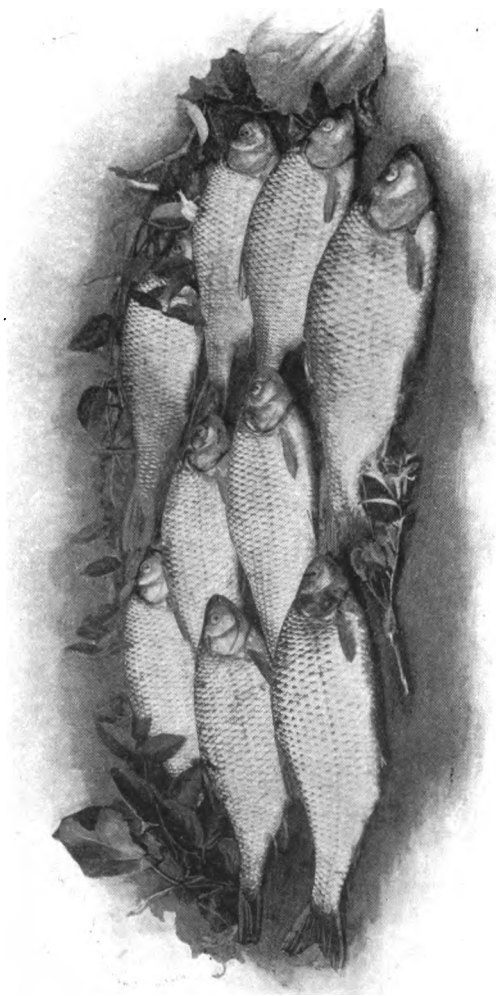
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE.—“Angling for Coarse Fish” forms the First Division of the Author's comprehensive work, **THE BOOK OF THE ALL-ROUND ANGLER** (price 5s. 6d.), of which “Angling for Pike” is the Second, “Angling for Game Fish” the Third, and “Angling in Salt Water” the Fourth Division. Each Division is absolutely complete in itself.

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ANGLING FOR COARSE FISH.

CHAPTER I.

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

Fresh and Salt-water Fish of the United Kingdom—Haunts of Coarse Fish in Summer and Winter—Effect of Floods and Colour in Water—Use and Importance of Ground bait, &c., &c.

IN attempting a concise treatise on angling I am obliged, somewhat against my will, to confine my remarks solely to the practical portions of the subject, and to eschew that pleasant chit-chat about fish-lore, curious angling incidents, and the pleasures of the sport, on which writers on fishing have delighted to dilate since the time of worthy Isaak Walton. This being an eminently practical age, the omission, which enables a careful description of tackle and methods of angling to be given, may not be regarded altogether as a defect, especially as there is little or nothing new to be added to the more ornamental portions of the subject.

I am going to start with the assumption that a number of my readers have never handled a rod, for too many writers have ignored the A B C of the subject, and thus made their works only of use to persons already possessing a fair knowledge of fish and fishing. From the A B C, I propose to gradually lead up to the X Y Z, by which algebraical formula I mean

the refinements of angling. With the hope of inducing my readers to think for themselves, and not go a-fishing on rule-of-thumb principles, I have devoted a few pages to some general remarks on the habits and peculiarities of what are termed "coarse fish"—remarks earnestly commended to the notice of beginners in the gentle art.

For the purpose of a book on angling the scientific classification of fish is a little inconvenient; I will therefore divide the fish which are found in and around the United Kingdom into the four following classes:—

1. *Fish affording Sport to the Angler in Fresh Water:* Salmon, trout, grayling, char, pike or jack, roach, perch, barbel, chub, dace, gudgeon, carp, tench, bream, rudd, bleak, and eels.

2. *Small-fry, or Fresh-water Fish insignificant from their size, some of which are used as Bait for other Fish:* Minnow, loach, ruffe or pope, miller's thumb or bullhead, and stickleback.

3. *Fish which are Rare, or are not commonly taken by Anglers in Fresh Water:* Lamprey, flounder, burbolt or burbot, graining, gwyniad, ide, pollan, powan, vendace, and azurine roach, or, more properly, rudd.

4. *Sea-fish:* Bass, pollack, coalfish, grey mullet, mackerel, braize, bream, brill, chad, cod, conger, dabs, dogfish, dory, flounder, garfish, gurnard, haddock, hake, halibut, herring, horse mackerel, ling, plaice, poor cod, red mullet, sea trout, skate, smelt, sole, turbot, whiting, whiting pout, and wrasse.

Of the first class, salmon and trout are usually captured by means of an artificial fly cast on the surface of the water, and by small natural or artificial fish, so arranged as to spin when drawn through the water. They are also fished for with worms, and a few other baits worked both on the bottom and near the surface of the water; and trout are fished for with natural flies. Grayling are mostly fished for with the artificial fly, but great numbers are also taken with worms and gentles worked in a peculiar manner. Char are caught occasionally with flies, but more often with leaded spinning minnows, and at night time with worms. Pike are almost altogether fished for with small fish, dead or alive, or repre-

sentations of them. The remaining twelve fish of the class, though some of them will occasionally rise to the artificial fly, are usually captured by what is known as bottom fishing, i.e., fishing with a bait on or near the bottom. Most of these twelve fish require to be fished for in different ways: the methods often vary with the season; and not only with the season, but also with the place; and the position of the fish varies according to the season of the year, the colour and volume of the water, and the temperature of the water and air. It does not, therefore, require a large amount of intelligence to understand that, to angle successfully for these twelve fish in any river or lake of the United Kingdom, at any time of the year, involves the possession of a considerable amount of knowledge of the subject.

Before dealing with each fish specifically, I will endeavour to give some general ideas of their haunts in rivers, in spring, summer, autumn, and winter respectively, dealing with ponds and lakes later on.

In the spring months most coarse fish* are engaged in depositing their spawn among weeds, sedge, or on the bottom where the water is shallow. After spawning they are in an exhausted condition, desperately lean, desperately hungry, and therefore very easy to catch. Fortunately the law has prohibited their capture between March 14th and June 16th in most public waters in England, and I trust that any readers of this book who have an opportunity of angling in early spring during the fence months will not avail themselves of it. The fish at that time of the year give very little play, are absolutely worthless when caught, and their capture when out of condition is, by all sportsmanlike anglers, considered next door to poaching.

As after a certain interesting domestic event a visit to the seaside is often undertaken, so do roach, dace, chub, perch, barbel, and gudgeon after spawning delight in gravelly shallows where the current is swift, and the sparkling water

* All freshwater fish except salmon, trout, char, and grayling are usually so termed, though as a matter of fact some of them (*e.g.*, gudgeon and perch) are very delicate eating, and quite comparable with brown trout.

full of oxygen and very invigorating. At the end of two or three weeks they gradually work into water of a slightly greater depth—2ft. to 5ft.—where the stream is lively; but barbel very quickly take up their quarters in their regular haunts, which are for the most part weir pools, mill tails, deep holes, and eddies under clay banks. Chub, also, show a preference for swims under banks, especially those overshadowed by trees (having a weakness for insect food); but the majority of coarse fish do not move into deep water until about the end of July, and even then will often be found in only a few inches of water if the weather is very hot and the stream undisturbed by boats. Until the middle of August gudgeon remain in very shallow water, in the stream, and are most plentiful in swims bordering deep holes; but later on the largest ones are caught in swims 9ft. or 10ft. in depth. Tench and carp do not shift their position much during the summer, and are to be found mostly in moderately deep swims, close to weeds. Bream, also, dwell in deep holes, where the current is gentle.

The great thing to look for when fishing in the summer for roach, dace, perch, gudgeon, and pike, is a stream. Many anglers spoil their day's sport by fishing quiet corners where the water is still; and where there are no fish, except a few tench, eels, and a possible jack. Another thing to be borne in mind is that most fish will be found near and among weeds which give them shelter, and among which lies a large proportion of their food. The ideal swim for stream-loving fish during the hot months is one with weeds all round it, the bottom of soft, sandy gravel, the depth 5ft. to 10ft., and the stream moderate. And note well, that what I mean by a moderate stream is one moderate for any particular river. A moderate stream in the Thames would certainly be termed immoderate in the Bedfordshire Ouse, which runs for the most part sluggishly.

About August coarse fish begin to get into first-rate condition, and are found in somewhat deeper water than in the month preceding, but their exact position depends a good deal on the height of water and the character of the river. Rivers usually run fastest in the centre of their

channels, and therefore, in very dry seasons, the fish work out towards the middle to be in the stream. As a general rule, the higher the water, the nearer the fish are to the bank, and *vice versa*.

September and October are, all things being considered, the two best months of the year for bottom fishing. In the earlier months the angler has been handicapped by the great majority of fish taking up impregnable positions in the weeds; but now the weeds begin to rot, and become unpalatable to the fish, which therefore leave them. A few frosty nights have a great effect in causing the weeds to rot, and perch and jack to feed. Slightly deeper water must now be fished, but the angler must still take care to keep out in the stream, unless fishing for pike, tench, carp, bream, or eels, which are often found in almost still water at this time of year.

There are a few other points connected with summer fishing which I should mention. The angler can hardly fish too early or too late (except for gudgeon and chub) during the hot months. Many a man who might have become a reputable member of the fraternity has been "choked off"—to use an unclassical expression—by making his first attempts at the gentle art in the broiling heat of a July or August sun. From sunrise to breakfast-time, and from sunset to supper-time, are the hours which should be devoted to angling in hot weather, but I need hardly say that during the summer occur dull, showery days, with a gentle breeze from the south-west, when the fish feed on and off all day. One great advantage of wind or rain is that these otherwise unpleasant elements ruffle the surface of the water, and thus hide the angler from the fish. Fish rarely feed well before a very heavy fall of rain. They seem to have an instinctive knowledge that a great feast of worms is coming, and that they need not trouble themselves about trifles. I have repeatedly noticed that after a very bad day's sport, when the weather has seemed favourable, torrents of rain have come, and caused the water to rise and colour.

Another point to be remembered in summer is that, the

water being clear and the light strong, fish can perceive the angler at some considerable distance, and that, therefore, the farther the angler can be from the fish he seeks to catch, the better. The shallower the water, the more distant should be the angler from the fish. By a very scientific method of fishing (to be subsequently described), practised by the anglers of the Trent, this distant method of fishing is easily managed. The angler should be particularly careful to move about as little as possible if he thinks the fish can see him. I have noticed that certain fish care little for a man in full view of them who stands absolutely still, but the least movement on his part, and they are off. Above all things, the angler should never take up his position with the sun at his back, for a shadow on the water is fatal to success.

I need hardly say that the tackle should always be as fine as circumstances will allow, coarse, strong tackle only being advisable when, owing to weeds, old piles, stones, and such like, fish have to be held very hard to keep them from hanging themselves up. Some varieties of fish, particularly chub, when they have not seen the angler, and have no suspicion of his presence, will often take a bait presented to them on very coarse tackle; but once their suspicions are aroused, which, unfortunately, is often the case, they either refuse to feed at all, or will only take a bait if the line is of the finest. Personally, I always use tackle as fine as I can get it consistent with strength, but in rivers which are little fished, and are not particularly bright, such extreme fineness is not really necessary.

In the summer, a very great variety of baits are taken by the fish; but as baits which are good in one water sometimes altogether fail elsewhere, it is as well to obtain local information on the subject where it is available. At the same time, where the sport with what I may term local baits is not forthcoming, I never hesitate to try baits new to the place, and by that means sometimes make a good basket of fish. In winter the most common, and generally the best, bait is a worm.

We come now to winter fishing. The chief changes in the

river at this time of the year are absence of weeds, a lower temperature of the water, and, generally, an increase in the volume of water, and therefore an increase in the force of the current. The water may also be more coloured than in summer. I will leave this question of colour for the present, and only consider the effects the other circumstances have on the position of fish. The fish having now no weed-cover, seek the deeper portions of the streams, and are no doubt greatly influenced in this move by the change in the temperature of the water. Barbel, carp, gudgeon, and eels now cease to afford any sport to the angler, and bream and tench bite but rarely; but roach, dace, perch, chub, and pike feed well in suitable weather, and are in prime condition. If the water has increased much in volume, the difficulty is to find sufficiently quiet swims, for swims which were suitable in summer cannot now be fished on account of the increased force of the current. Chub will be in the same swims as in August, except when the stream has become too strong for them; but the other fish shift about a good deal, according to the height and colour of the water. If no quiet swims with gravelly or sandy bottoms are to be found, those with a muddy bottom may be tried. In such places I have frequently made good bags of roach and perch. If the water is as low as it usually is in summer, and the weather open, not very much difference will be found in the position of the fish (pike excepted) in winter and summer, due allowance, of course, being made for the absence of weeds.

As a rule, most coarse fish are caught in winter, when rivers are clearing after floods, and it is floods and coloured water which make the greatest difference in the position of the fish. Floods drive them into the eddies and quiet corners where they can get out of the great force of the stream, and where, no doubt, their food collects. Colour in the water has the peculiar effect of bringing fish on to the shallows, and the thicker the water, the shallower are the swims in which they will be found. I have caught roach in winter, when the river has been very thick, in not more than 18in. of water. Had the water been clear at that season, I should have fished

at a depth of, perhaps, eighteen feet instead of inches. Two reasons probably bring fish into shallow water when the river is coloured: First, because in the deeps, light cannot reach the bottom, and food cannot be seen; and second, because many varieties of fish prefer shallow to deep water when they can safely come into such places without being seen by man and their other enemies. The best hours for fishing in the winter are from eleven to three, but a good deal depends on the temperature of the air, the fish feeding best during the more genial portion of the day.

When rivers rise in flood, and the water spreads over the meadows, the fish flock on to the grass, and feed on the drowned insects and worms. At such times it is, as a rule, of not much use to go fishing, owing to the great difficulty of finding the quarry; but an angler may unexpectedly stumble on a place where fish are collected together in great numbers, and have good sport; and local fishermen, who know the river thoroughly, can generally point out a spot or two where some fish are to be caught. On the whole, however, fishing when rivers are well over their banks is unsatisfactory work.

What I have said concerning floods and coloured waters applies nearly as much to summer as to winter fishing, the only difference being, that in summer the fish work out of the eddies into the stream rather sooner than they do in winter.

Concerning the haunts of fish at various seasons in lakes and ponds there is not much to be said, beyond that in summer the fish are to be found in water of moderate depth, shifting to somewhat deeper quarters in the autumn. Where the bottoms of such places are variously of mud and sand, or gravel, more fish will be found on the gravel or sand than on the mud; as in rivers, the fish will always be found near weeds. The most successful method of pond and lake fishing is to feed the fish regularly at certain places, and there angle for them. My experience of the Shannon lakes, which are like small inland seas, is that no coarse fish, except a few pike, are to be caught in winter (from November to February). In places these lakes are very deep, and to the deeps the fish probably repair on the advent of cold weather. It may be the same

in other lakes of similar size and depth, but I cannot speak from experience as to that.

In bottom fishing, the judicious use of ground-bait is very important. The old idea about ground-bait was that it collected vast numbers of fish together at one spot; but it is now known that in rivers it does not have that effect to any considerable extent (unless continued regularly for a week or more), but induces the fish to feed on certain food to which they were previously unused, and lulls their suspicions. For instance, a roach in the month of July is feeding on water-weed and the minute animal life which is found among weeds; a lump of paste is put before his nose, and he, naturally, if a well-informed roach, views it with suspicion, and probably refuses to take it. But if a quantity of bread and bran is cast into the water, he and his friends begin to feed, and look upon the lump of bread-paste as only a fragment of the rest. When fish are very shy, they will only take the bait on the hook during about two minutes after the ground-bait is thrown in; in such cases quite small quantities should be used at a time. This peculiar property of ground-bait causing fish to feed, was forcibly brought to my mind only a few days ago. I was fishing under a bridge where I knew dwelt some fine chub; the water was coloured, and my bait was a worm. At first the fish would not bite; after waiting a few minutes I threw in a few worms; just as these must have floated by my hook I had a bite, and caught a fine chub. Then came no more bites until I threw in more worms. I have known similar instances occur on many occasions.

As there is a limit to what fish can eat, it is very easy to throw in too much ground-bait; and it follows that, in waters where the fish are few, less ground-bait should be thrown in than where they are plentiful, and there are more to eat it. Another very important point—perhaps the most important of all—is to throw in the ground-bait at such a spot that it will reach the bottom just where your hook-bait is waiting for a fish to come and take it. There are ways of making ground-bait sink fast or slowly, which I will refer to later

on. Of course, if the water is shallow and slow running, the ground-bait can be thrown in nearly over the bait on the hook, while if the stream is swift and deep, the ground-bait must be thrown in some distance above the swim. The exact position depends on the depth of the water, the rate of the current, and the weight, or, rather, the specific gravity, of the ground-bait; these matters must necessarily be left to the angler's judgment.

So far I have only referred to the use of ground-bait while fishing. Ground-bait is very frequently thrown in daily for several days before the swim is fished. The amount thrown in is usually considerable—more in rivers than in still waters—and it is highly desirable to leave the fish unfed (so that they may recover their appetite) for at least twenty hours before the swim is fished. While the fishing is going on, a little ground-bait is thrown in at intervals, to keep the fish on the look-out for food, but not sufficient to satisfy their hunger.

In lakes and ponds, I am inclined to believe that ground-baiting for several days in succession does collect the fish in one spot, besides having the other advantages mentioned; there being no stream in such places, there is no difficulty in knowing where to cast in the ground-bait. If more is thrown in than the fish can eat, a portion is likely to turn sour and keep the fish away.

The secrets of ground-baiting are, shortly—to use ground-bait of the same kind as the hook-bait, but coarser in quality—the reason for which is, I hope, obvious; to cast it in sparingly when fishing the swim—little and often being the rule; to cast it in so far above the swim that it sinks just where the angler is fishing; and lastly, if the swim is baited for several days in succession, to leave it unbaited for at least twenty hours before it is fished. Careful attention to these particulars is half the battle in angling for coarse fish. Shall I insult my readers' common-sense by adding that ground-bait should not be mixed or handled with dirty hands, or even with clean hands if scented with tobacco smoke?

The points which anglers have to be careful about are—not

to excite the suspicions of the fish by showing themselves more than needful, by tramping the banks, by disturbing the water, by casting a shadow over the fish, or by dragging the bait through the water more often than is absolutely necessary. The bait should sink as slowly and as naturally as possible (except in punt-fishing in a strong stream, when it has to sink quickly); it should not, with certain exceptions, be checked in its course down stream, and should generally be worked close to the bottom. The swims which are likely to contain the most fish should be chosen, and the angler will, if he be wise, go after the fish which are most likely to be on the feed. My dearest friend cannot persuade me to jack fish in the middle of a hot summer's day, though I will gladly catch gudgeon or fly-fish for chub with him; nor, on the other hand, can he induce me to gudgeon fish in December, when I know I am likely to do well with the jack. Going after the wrong fish is one of the most common mistakes with beginners.

The matters I have so far written about are well worth patient study, for when the general principles of angling are mastered the rest comes very easy, and the angler, instead of working by rule of thumb, understands the why and the wherefore of what he does, or is directed to do, and acquires the power of meeting any difficulties which may arise. The mere hooking and landing a fish are comparatively simple matters, acquired in a few months' practice. The great difficulties in bottom fishing are to find the fish, and, when they are found, to induce them to take the bait offered to them. In fishing, as in most other matters, common sense will be found of great service; but it must be confessed that fish are eccentric animals, and often act in a way "no fellah can understand."

CHAPTER II.

TACKLE FOR BOTTOM FISHING.

Rods — Rod-fittings — Reels and Winches — Running Lines — Hooks — Gut, Hair, Knots, and Leads — Float Tackle and Floats Leger and Paternoster — Landing-net, &c., &c.

BEFORE we go a-fishing a visit has to be paid to the tackle-shop, and about the first thing we buy is

The Rod. — At the present day a most marvellous and almost bewildering assortment of fishing-rods are offered for sale, adapted to every conceivable purpose. The use of a rod is to strike in the hook, to keep an even strain on a fish's mouth, and to guide him from weeds, old stumps and other dangers, safely into the landing-net — in anglers' language, to "play" him. If our tackle is strong, and we are thus able to put a great deal of pressure on the fish, we can use a stiff rod; but if our tackle is fine, and the pressure on the fish has to be of a very gentle character, it may become desirable to have a light, pliant, yielding rod. Of the twelve fish with which we are now concerned, roach, dace, perch, rudd, and gudgeon require a light rod, with a not too stiff top, as they are fished for with very fine tackle, the line being often nothing more than a hair from a stallion's tail. The other fish, which run to a considerable size, of course require something slightly stronger. The choice of a rod is somewhat a matter of fancy, no two anglers quite agreeing as to what is best; but I am inclined to think that for boat and punt work

an East Indian cane (bamboo)* 10ft. or 11ft. punt-rod, and an 11ft. or 12ft. rod, of East Indian cane, a good deal stouter and stronger, but in other respects similar, will be found very suitable for bottom fishing generally. For ladies or boys slightly shorter rods are advisable. These bottom rods are usually made with lancewood tops, but greenheart is far better, and should always be ordered. The light 11ft. rod is best made in three pieces, each 3ft. 8in. in length; and it is a capital plan to have an extra butt (the butt is the lowest length) made the same, or a greater length, which can be added when a longish rod (15ft. 8in.) is required. The increased cost is very trifling. I have adopted this plan for some years with, occasionally, great advantage.

If the angler can only afford to purchase one rod, he will have to choose one something between the two above described; and whether he buy only one, or a dozen, he should take a friend with him who understands such matters. It is next to impossible to give an exact description of a rod on paper.

* I am indebted to a gentleman connected with the wholesale fish-hook and tackle trade for the following account (sent me with specimens) of the various canes which are called indiscriminately bamboo or bamboo canes, and are used in rod-making:—

"First in point of importance is, undoubtedly, the '*East India*,' or '*Mottled*' These canes are largely used for splitting for built cane fly-rods, also for making up into spinning and trolling rods, and bottom rods of all kinds, and even for stiff fly-rods. They grow to 20ft. and 25ft. long, and taper to a point.

"'*Carolina*,' or '*South*' cane (or '*South Carolina*,' which is the proper name, and which indicates, I suppose, the locality where grown), is what is ordinarily used for cane or bamboo bottom and general rods. It is much cheaper than East India cane, and of course lighter, though not nearly so strong. Canes of this kind are rarely obtainable larger than about 1in. in diameter at the thick end, and are about the same length, and taper to a point, as the East India cane. I send you a sample stained as well as plain, as the staining so alters the appearance that you might take them for two distinct sorts. This Carolina cane is now getting rather scarce, so another kind has been introduced, called by the cane-importers, '*Yellow Bamboo Rods*.' They are about the same lengths, &c., as the Carolinas, and though much stronger, are not so good for rod-making, as the knots are so large and prominent, and there is always a flat piece, or '*gutter*,' going up from each knot. They are called by some people '*Japanese*' canes, though I don't think they come from Japan.

"'*White Spanish*,' or '*Portuguese*' cane (or, properly, *reed*) is very light, and is used for making—the butts and tops excepted—the long roach rods which the Lea roach-fishers use. They grow up to about 20ft. long, and towards the thin end the knots are very close together.

"*Tonguins* are only to be got in short lengths, about 3ft., of various sizes, from about ½in. to 1in. diameter. They are nearly straight—i.e., there is little, if any, taper on them; they are very strong, will almost stand jumping on, but are necessarily heavy.

"*Jungle Cane* is solid and very heavy. It is used to split up for splicing on the ends of lancewood and other fly tops. The piece sent is a length between two knots, and is just ready for splitting. "F. W."

For roach-fishing (after the manner of the London bank anglers) in large rivers, such as the Thames, it is necessary to buy a white cane roach-rod, from 15ft. to 20ft. in length, straight, stiff for the most part, tapering gradually from the butt, and as little topheavy as possible. This rod, which is by no means a strong one, will be found of little use except for roach-fishing from the bank. The Thames and Lea roach-fishermen like to have the points of their rods just over the float, and as in summer weeds often fringe the shore for a considerable distance out, these very long rods are necessary for this particular style of angling. My plan, of sometimes using an extra butt with the light 11ft. rod, gives a fair makeshift for the regulation Lea roach-rod.

When a rod is being chosen, it should always be handled with a reel attached to its butt, otherwise its true balance cannot be ascertained. Formerly most rods were made of hard wood—hickory and greenheart being great favourites; but as bamboo is not only very light, but also possesses the requisite strength, it has very properly become the favourite material for most bottom fishing and spinning rods. People who have the good fortune to live close to a river or lake should use rods made of one single piece of bamboo, with a jungle-cane top, a few inches in length, spliced on. These are the most delightful rods I know of. The only disadvantage connected with their use is that they cannot be taken to pieces and put in a bag. They are largely used by the professional fishermen of the Thames. To prevent rods warping, it is a good plan to tie a loop of string at one end of each joint, fasten on a weight at the other, and hang the joints up by the loops. Rods should be sandpapered and re-varnished once a year if much used, and the ring-whippings renewed occasionally.

Rod-fittings.—Besides cane or wood, a rod consists of metal ferrules round the ends of the joints, an arrangement for fastening a winch or reel to the butt, and rings to convey the line from the reel to the top of the rod. On fly-rods it is usual to have various devices connected with the ferrules, to prevent the joints from coming apart, and as, when casting out the tackle used in bottom fishing, joints do occasionally

fly out, I do not see why these same devices should not also be used on bottom rods. Two arrangements of the kind which are well adapted for the purpose are Hardy's patent lock-fast joint (see Fig. 1) and Farlow's rod-joint fastener. The joints should be always double brazed—i.e., completely covered with brass. Joints sometimes stick together. By holding them in the flame of a spirit-lamp or candle, they will usually come apart, the outside ferrule expanding with the heat. It is as well to rub the joints occasionally with vaseline or soft soap; this prevents them sticking.

The most common method of fastening the reel or winch to the rod consists of two brass rings—one fixed, the other sliding. The best arrangement of the kind is that known as the Weeger wedge-fast winch-fitting, and there are various patent fittings—Warner's, Farlow's, &c.

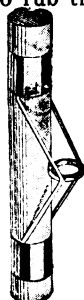
Rod-rings are either upright and rigid, or movable. The former are by far the best made of hard metal, according to the patterns illustrated in Fig. 2. On the whole, pattern *b*, though more expensive, is the better, and should always be used for the two rings next the reel. For the top ring of all I have a natural prejudice—shared by a good many other anglers—in favour of the ring shown in Fig. 3. Rings made on that pattern work on pivots, save a good deal of wear and tear to the line by diminishing friction, and the line rarely fouls round



FIG. 1.
FASTENING
FOR ROD-
JOINTS.



(a.)



(b.)

FIG. 2. ROD-RINGS.



FIG. 3.
"BICKER-
DYKE"
ROD-TOP
RING.

them as it does with most other rings. An interior ring of Phosphor Bronze is introduced into the more expensive of these rings, and is decidedly an advantage.

If I was ordering a bottom rod to be made for me according to the above ideas, it would shortly be described as a mottled East India cane 10ft. (or longer, according to requirements) bottom rod, three joints, two greenheart tops (one being shorter and slightly stouter than the other), extra butt, snake rings, two bridge rings next reel, Bickerdyke top ring, Weeger winch-fitting, lockfast joints. Either of the winch-fittings or fastenings for joints I have mentioned would answer almost as well as those given in this description. I must confess to rather a fancy for "South" cane for light rods. It might be best to have the lighter rod of "South" cane, and the heavier rod of East India cane.

Reels and Winches.—Of these there are numberless kinds, and the angler can, if it please him, pay thirty shillings for a most elaborate affair. My own choice would fall on either a plain check brass winch, or a wooden Nottingham reel with

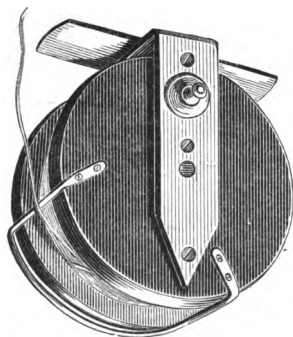


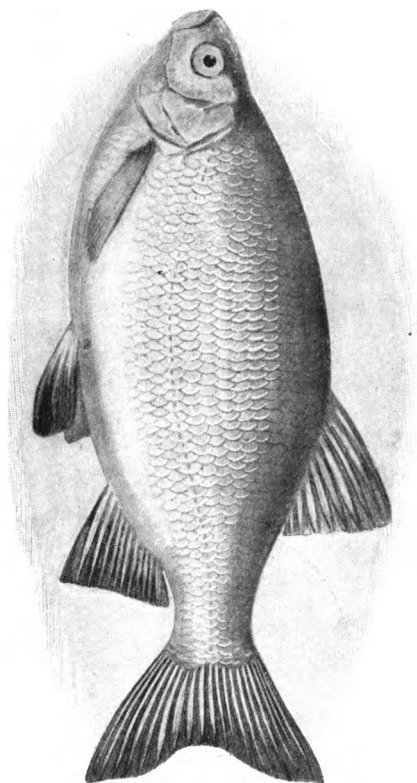
FIG. 4. NOTTINGHAM REEL WITH MOVABLE CHECK AND IMPROVED LINE-GUARD.

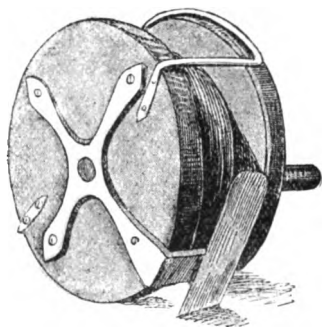
a check which can be taken on or off, and fitted with a wire guard—an idea of my own—to prevent the line uncoiling and entangling. Of the two, I much prefer the reel, on account of the rapidity with which the line can be wound on it, thanks to the large circumference of the barrel, and the facility with which it can be turned into a fast-running Nottingham winch by merely moving the button at the back. These reels (see

Fig 4) * are sold everywhere, and my guard can be put on them by any metal-worker for a few pence. The combination reels

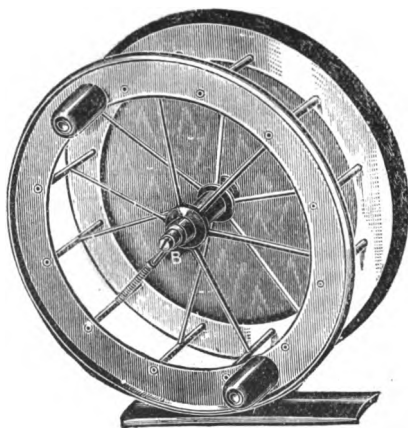
* The reel illustrated is one of the cheapest made, but answers its purpose well enough if carefully looked after. The better class Nottingham reels have star-shaped metal backs, which give rigidity to the wood.

AN OUSE RUDD
(Drawn from life)





STAR BACK NOTTINGHAM REEL



ARIEL REEL.

sold by Slater, of Newark-on-Trent, are somewhat similar in their working, and are admirable for all kinds of fishing. For the small rod already described, a reel 3in. in diameter will be found suitable. A 2½in., or even a 2in., reel will *do* to hold 50yds. or so of fine line for roach-fishing; but I prefer the larger size, because it winds the line in much faster than the smaller size, and helps to balance the rod. For the heavier rod I should use a 3½in. reel. It is a good plan (especially when the line is fine) to put a little wadding round the barrel of the reel before the line is wound on. The "Ariel" Reel is one of the best made for Nottingham fishing, being exceptionally light. The line dries quickly on the skeleton frame. It should have a check and line-guard.

Running Lines.—The only lines for bottom fishing worthy of mention are those made of silk, either plaited or twisted. The twisted lines kink if any quantity of line is left loose; but those anglers who acquire the art of Nottingham fishing (see Chap. III.) never do leave any loose folds to kink, and prefer these lines on account of their strength, which is greater than that of a plaited line of the same size. Persons who cannot or do not wish to fish after the Nottingham method had better use plaited lines. For roach and gudgeon-fishing the line should be of pure silk, plaited or twisted, and as fine as it can be obtained; but more generally useful is the Nottingham line used for chub-fishing. It is strong enough for chub or perch, and is fine enough for roach-fishing. It is also very cheap; I get 100yds. of this size line from Carter and Co., of Islington, for 2s. On the large reel a plaited line, about double the thickness of the roach-line, and dressed with an oil dressing, will be found useful for the larger varieties of fish. If, however, a Nottingham line is preferred, it should be just a trifle thicker than the one used for chub. These lines being very fine, soon get worn out, and after a long day's fishing it is always as well to break off 4yds. or 5yds. of line, which is no great loss. A really well-dressed waterproof line is a most difficult thing to procure from a tackle-shop, as the makers use too much driers in their mixtures, and the lines dry quickly and hard. A well-dressed

line takes months to dry, but it dries soft, and does not "knuckle," i.e., crack. It is very necessary to have a soft dressing for lines intended to be used in bottom fishing. The very best dressing is simply raw linseed oil, but it takes such a long time to dry that it is rarely used; next best is boiled linseed oil. The line is soaked for a week in the oil (cold), or placed in it under an air-pump, then stretched between two trees, well rubbed with a piece of smooth leather (this gets air-bubbles out of the line), and then put to soak for two more days. It is then stretched between the trees, the superfluous oil wiped gently off, and left to dry—an operation which will take about two months. In wet weather the line must be taken indoors. When this first coat is dry, the line should be put into the oil for two more days, and again be put out to dry. Altogether the operation takes about six months. A line so prepared will last for years. To put on a fine polish when dry, well rub the line with a piece of leather on which is a little raw linseed oil.

It is never advisable to re-dress lines with any boiled oil mixture, or at any time to soak them in hot oil mixtures. A simple method of dressing lines, new or old, is to rub them briskly with a cake made of paraffin wax and deer or mutton kidney suet in equal parts. This dressing has frequently to be renewed. Twisted lines are sometimes dressed. Their strength is their chief recommendation. New lines should be very carefully uncoiled. I am indebted to Mr. Pennell for the following capital dodge: Make a cylinder out of a newspaper, and place it through the middle of the coil of line. Put a stick through the paper, and rest the ends of the stick on two chairs. Fasten the loose end of the line to the reel, and wind away. The newspaper, of course, turns on the stick, and the line comes off freely.

Lines should *always* be unwound to dry after a day's fishing. They can be coiled round chair-backs, or, *if plaited*, merely left on the floor or on a table. Several capital winders for drying lines are sold.

Hooks.—There are nearer a hundred than fifty different bends of hooks. The ordinary round bend, of which a scale

of sizes is given (Fig. 5), is most useful for bottom fishing generally; but the well-known Crystal hooks (see Fig. 6) are

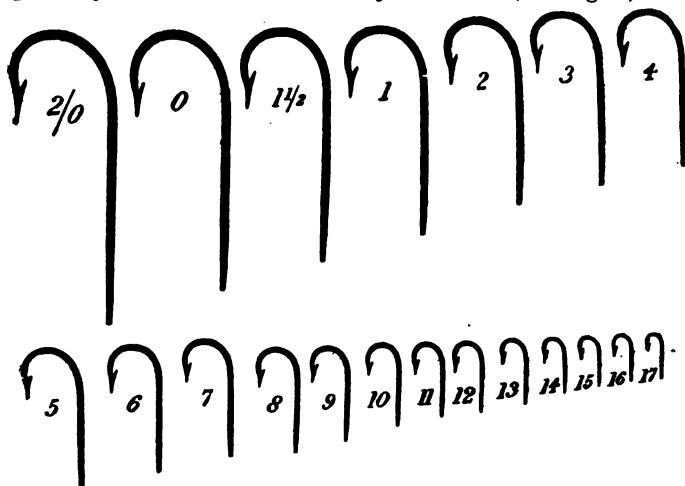


FIG. 5. ROUND BEND HOOK-SCALE, WITH REDDITCH NUMBERING.

first-rate for roach-fishing with gentles or small worms; and in larger sizes I have found them admirable for perch-fishing

in summer, when the bait is a minnow. In bottom fishing, nothing but the round bend need be used; but I prefer the Crystal hooks for the purposes named. It is the worst possible economy to buy cheap hooks; more than half those manufactured are rubbish. A hook should be carefully tempered, so that when tested with the thumb-nail it is not too soft, and, bending, remains bent like a piece of lead; nor too hard, snapping off like a piece of cast-iron. The



FIG. 6. CRYSTAL HOOK.

careful angler will test every hook before attaching it to his line.

Hooks are usually fastened to the line by laying the end

of the gut (first bitten to make it flat) along the shank of the hook, and binding the two together with fine silk which has first been rubbed on cobbler's or bee's-wax, which can be held in a piece of leather. Various methods of preparing wax for this purpose have been suggested, but I have never found one possessing the stickfast qualities of the old-fashioned cobbler's wax. The binding should be begun at the end of the shank, and finished off as soon as the end of the gut has been reached (see Fig. 7). The loops in the illustration of course have to be pulled tight. The same finish is effected by laying the end of the tying-silk along the shank, and pointing in the same direction as the shank, and taking three more turns with the other part of the silk, passing the bend and point of the hook through the loop at each turn. Nothing then remains but to pull the end of the silk which lies along the shank tight. This most useful finish is well worth learning. The shank may be touched with shellac varnish (two parts gum Benjamin, six parts shellac, eight parts spirits of wine) or coloured. As the shank of the hook is very frequently visible to the fish, it ought to be the same colour as the bait. The best mixture for the purpose, recommended by Bailey, of Nottingham, is a little finely-ground vermilion, chrome yellow, or white lead (according to the colour desired), moistened with a few drops of French polish. This paint can be laid on thinly with a small camel's-hair brush, and the hooks, when painted or varnished, should be stuck into a piece of cork to dry. Other good preparations for this purpose are the bath or furniture enamels sold pretty well everywhere. The points of all hooks should be sharp, and the barbs should be small, particularly in hooks used for the chub, barbel, and carp. A rank barb—one which projects much from the hook—has the fatal effect of frequently preventing the hook going through the

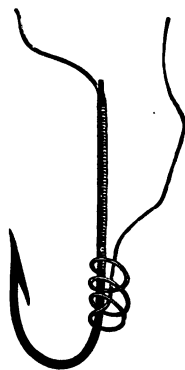


FIG. 7. FASTENING OFF THE BINDING.

lip of the fish. Personally, I would rather have no barb at all for bottom fishing than a large, rank one. In the twentieth century hooks may be made with modified barbs, but at present the angler is well advised if he carries a small needle or watch-maker's file, and reduces the barbs and sharpens up the sides of the points of all large-sized hooks. Fig. 8 illustrates a very improved form of hook for worm-fishing, invented by Mr. R. B. Marston. The barb on the shank keeps the worm in its place.



FIG. 8. THE MARSTON SLICED HOOK.

Eyed hooks—that is, hooks with a small eye at the end of the shank, to which the line is fastened—are not much used by bottom fishers, but it is as well to have a few of various sizes in one's book. These hooks are easily fastened to gut by the method (one of several) shown in Fig. 9, and known as the Turle knot. I doubt if there is a better one for bottom fishing. The gut is (1) put through the eye, and a slip-knot made in it; (2) the hook is then put through the noose, and

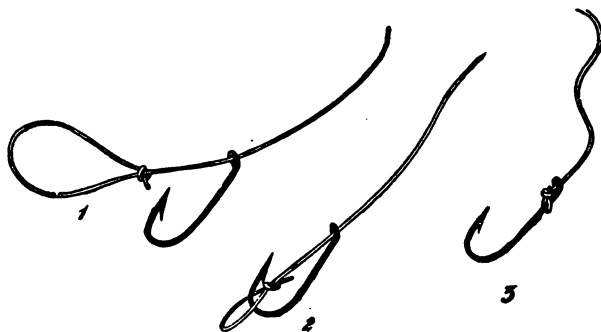


FIG. 9. THE METHOD OF FASTENING EYED HOOKS TO GUT.

(3) the noose pulled tight. Stewart tackle is easily made with eyed hooks (see Chap. III.).

Gut, Hair, Knots, and Leads.—Silkworm gut is now more used for the lower portions of fishing-lines than anything else, but horsehair is preferred for roach-fishing by many London bank anglers who excel in that branch of the art. Gut is manufactured in lengths varying from about

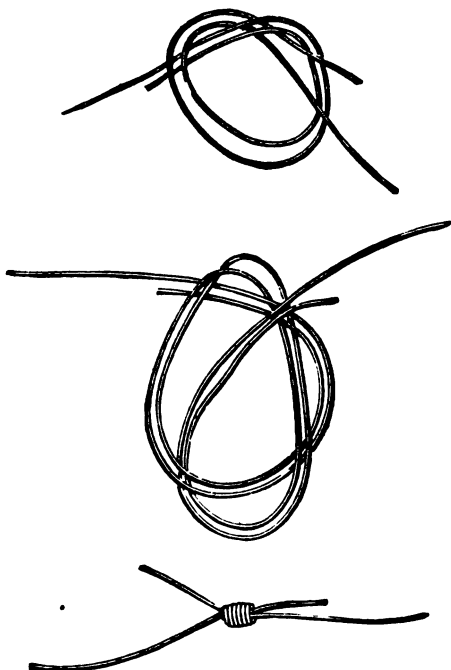


FIG. 10. KNOT (IN THREE STAGES) FOR JOINING LENGTHS OF GUT TOGETHER.

10in. to 20in. It is sold either as it comes from Spain, or else mechanically reduced in thickness by being softened and drawn through metal plates, when it is called, technically, *fine-drawn gut*.

For roach-fishing in summer, fine-drawn gut, or hair, must

be used. The former quickly gets rough, and as soon as this happens it should either be rubbed smooth with indiarubber, or a fresh length used. The finest undrawn gut is useful for fish which do not exceed 2lb. in weight. Larger fish require stronger tackle, unless the water is free from weeds, Good gut is round, long, and free from specks when held up to the light. The lengths are best joined together by the knot shown in Fig. 10; but the gut must be first soaked in cold water—rain-water for preference—for at least an hour. When time is valuable, warm water may be used, but its use is not advisable. The hook-link generally has a loop at the end of it, which is used to fasten the hook to a corresponding loop at the end of the main length of gut (see Fig. 11). Gut is sold ready made up into 1yd., 2yd., or 3yd. lengths, or in hanks of a hundred pieces, which require tying together.

As to whether gut should be stained or not, there is a difference of opinion among anglers; but I never yet heard



FIG. 11. HOOK-LINK LOOPED TO GUT-LENGTH.

anyone deny that gut which has to lie on the bottom—as in leger fishing—should be stained to as nearly as possible match the gravel or sand. Gut which does not lie on the bottom should, I think, be stained to harmonise and appear a part of the river vegetation—green in summer, brown in autumn and winter. Judson's dyes, used strong, are most useful for staining gut. More simple stains are ink, strong coffee lees, and strong green tea. I need hardly indicate the colours which they give to the gut. Ink gives a neutral tint, which is useful for gut used in fly-fishing. Ink and coffee mixed make a muddy stain, admirable for gut which has to lie on a muddy bottom. To preserve gut, keep it out of the light, wrapped in wash-leather or a sheet of pure indiarubber. Gut should always be soaked in cold water before being used. One of the best methods of attaching

the loop in the gut at the end of the float or other tackle, to the running line, is shown in Fig. 12.

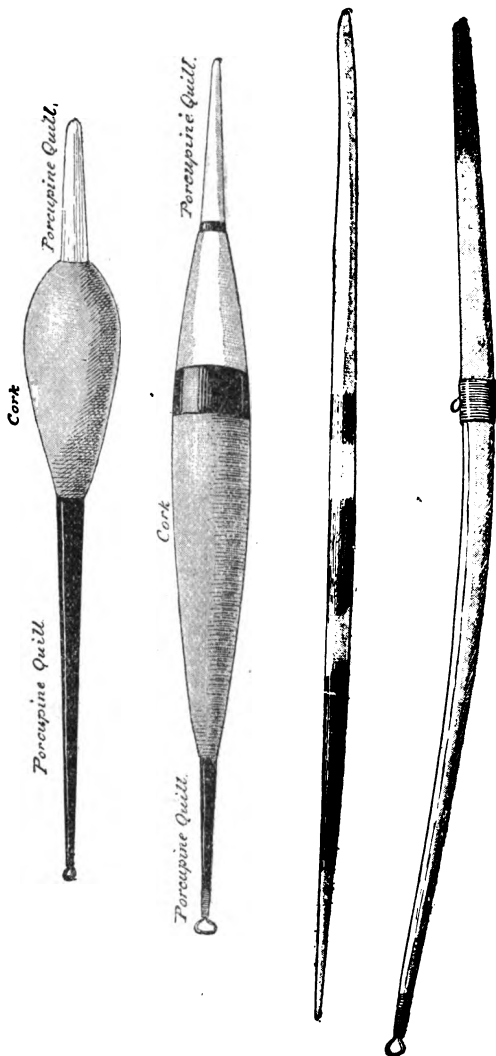
Horsehair is most useful for roach and gudgeon lines. It is not so strong nor so fine as fine-drawn gut, but I have long been of the opinion that the fish are less suspicious of it than of gut. Hair is superior to gut in being elastic, long, and neither glistening when new nor fraying when old. The best horsehair comes from the tails of stallions. That obtained at violin bow-makers' is sure to be good. I prefer light brown horsehair to any other. Hair may be tied with the same knot as gut. If the angler is fishing Nottingham fashion, with his float at some distance, he should not use hair, on account of its elasticity; but when fishing under the point of a long, stiff rod, as do the London roach-fishers, the elasticity is a decided advantage.



FIG. 12. METHOD OF ATTACHING GUT-TACKLE TO RUNNING LINE.

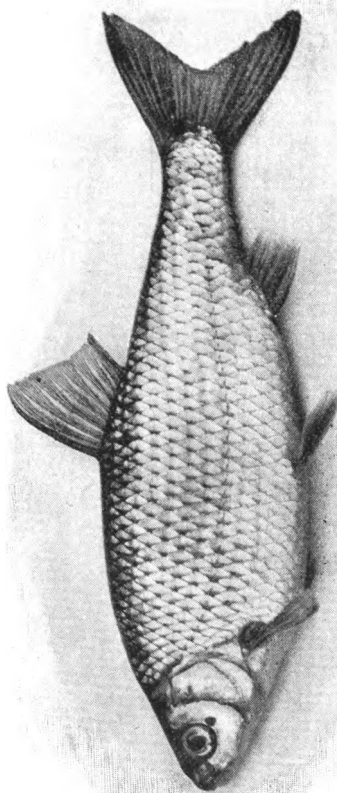
There are two methods of weighting a line—with split or bored shot, or with lead wire. Shot can be split with a small, inexpensive machine made for this purpose; or with a pen-knife, if half sunk in a small hole in a piece of wood. They are usually bought ready split. They are either bitten on to the line, or pinched on with pincers. If the line is fine, whether gut or horsehair, it should be doubled where the shots are placed. To fix lead wire, lay a darning-needle, or long pin, alongside the line, and twist the wire round both needle and line. When enough wire has been twisted on, withdraw the needle, and twist up the coil tighter. Small pierced bullets or swan-shot are useful for leger float tackle, working between two split shot placed 12in. or more apart.

Float-tackle and Floats.—Having purchased rod, reel-line, and hooks, the next thing to buy, or to make up—for the making up is a very simple matter—is the gut or hair line, on which are the hook, float, and either split shot or some lead wire, used to partially sink the float in the water, and keep it in a perpendicular position and the bait near



A USEFUL SERIES OF FLOATS.

(The porcupine quill should be continued right through the cork).



A THAMES ROACH
(*From life*).

the bottom. The accompanying sketch (Fig. 13) shows the position of the float in the water and the tackle beneath it.

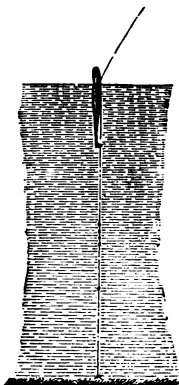


FIG. 13. TYPICAL
FLOAT-TACKLE.

It will be noticed that the line passes through a ring at the bottom of the float, and is kept in position by a cap, usually of quill or gutta-percha, which encircles the top of the float. The best float-caps I know of are made of a "gum" material resembling oilcloth. The float shown is excellent for roach-fishing in rivers. It is made of a piece of goose-quill, stopped at the bottom with the end of a porcupine-quill. The top should be touched with red paint. The lowest shot should be usually a little above the length of gut on which the hook is tied (9in. or 10in. from the hook), and the others about 9in. higher. Five shots are shown in the engraving, but the exact number, of course, depends on the buoyancy of each particular float, and can

only be found by experiment. A float should be always looked upon as a necessary evil, and should be as small as the stream will allow. The size of the float should depend on the amount of lead one has to put on the line to keep the hook near the bottom. The faster the stream, the more weight is required, and *vice versa*. As a matter of fact, it is wiser to regulate the float to the shot, rather than the shot to the float. In perfectly still water anglers sometimes use no weight on the line at all, the float being what is termed a self-cocking one—i.e., weighted at the lower end. A piece of lead wire wound round the lower end of any float makes it self-cocking. A few shot, or a little quicksilver, are sometimes placed inside a float made of two pieces of quill; this also causes it to cock without any shot being on the line. When no weight is used on the line, the bait, of course, sinks slowly and naturally. The tackle shown in Fig. 13 is suitable for many kinds of bottom fishing in moderate streams. In stronger streams, more shot, placed nearer the hook, and a larger float, should be

used. The float from which the drawing was made is 5½ in. long. It was a favourite float of the late J. G. Fennell, Author of the "Book of the Roach," and was given me just before his death.

Of floats there is an endless variety offered to the angler. There are pretty things made up of quill, and beautifully tapered with bone ends; others of cork—gaudy arrangements of blue and red; and others, again, of reed; but the best, least expensive, and most workmanlike floats are quills from the wing-feathers of large birds, such as geese, swans, turkeys, and pelicans. These are buoyant, carrying, for their size, a large amount of shot, and slide into the water very quickly, without frightening the fish. When a very small float is required, nothing is better than a small porcupine-quill, which

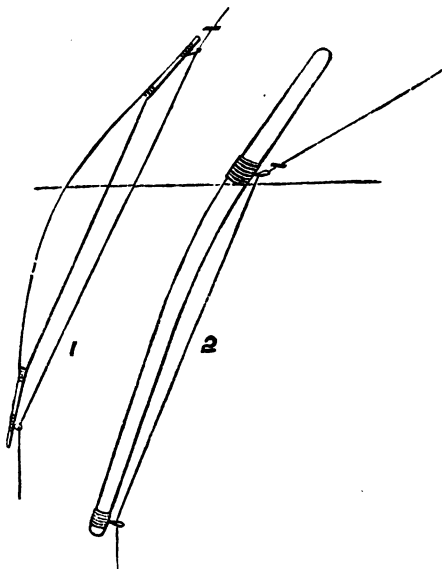


FIG. 14. TWO SLIDING FLOATS.

will carry at most two or three No. 2 shots. If cork floats are used, they should be nicely tapered, and the two ends should be made by a single porcupine-quill run through the centre of the cork. Fig. 14 represents two sliding floats—one (1) of cork, and the other (2) of quill—so called because they slide down the line. They are kept from slipping too high up the line by a fragment of indiarubber, gut, or a bristle placed on the line, so small that it will go through the rings of the

rod, yet so large that it will not slip through the rings on the float. The use of these floats will be described later on. For a beginner, the purchase of three quills of different sizes will probably be found sufficient. Five feet is an average length of gut to have between the hook and the running line.



The Leger and Paternoster.—These quaintly-named pieces of tackle are used for fishing without a float—on the bottom and just off the bottom respectively. Fig. 15 shows very clearly the construction of the leger. The lead works on a foot of the finest patent gimp, at each end of which is a bead or split shot. The hook above the lead is usually omitted, except in winter fishing, when a live-bait is put on it, and a worm on the lower hook. The leger is made light or heavy, according to the strength of the stream. In some cases only a light pistol-bullet is used, and the gimp omitted. The gut below the lead should be at least 36in. in length; above it, about 24in. The paternoster, being used almost entirely for perch-fishing, will be found described in Chapter IV.

Landing Net.—A most useful affair for lifting fish into the boat or on to the bank when hooked. The larger the ring of the net is, up to a diameter of 18in., the better. The angler must be the judge of how much he likes to burden himself with when he goes fishing. If he has to carry his own impedimenta, he will probably prefer a small net, but if he fishes from a punt, a large one. The landing-nets used by Thames puntsmen are usually of large mesh, mounted on an iron ring 18in. in diameter, which is lashed on to a 6ft. ash pole. Of the light folding nets, I think the “Hi Regan,” brought out by Warner and Sons, of Redditch, is the best.

FIG. 15. THE
LEGER.

A very inexpensive folding-net is made in the shape of a triangle, two sides of which are of wood, the other of light

cord. If the angler fishes a good deal from the bank, and is in the habit of roving about with a paternoster for perch, or with Nottingham tackle for coarse fish generally, he of course wants some arrangement for carrying his net. I have had several, and have come to the conclusion that the one largely used by the Hampshire fly-fishermen (see Fig. 16) is the best suited to the purpose. The net can easily be drawn

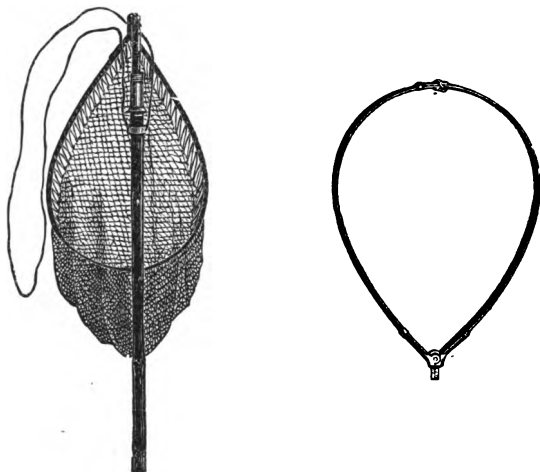


FIG. 16. PORTABLE FOLDING LANDING-NET AND BOW OF "HI REGAN" NET.

from its sling with one hand, and a slight jerk causes it to spring out straight, and the handle, which is telescopic, to double its length.

Plummet, Disgorger, and Sundries.—Plummetts are either made of rolled lead, or consist of a solid piece of lead (see Fig. 17), with a brass ring at the top, and cork let into the base. The hook is put through the ring, and fastened into the cork. Plummetts are used for taking the depth; but by sticking a piece of tallow in a hollow scooped out of the plummet, the nature of the bottom is easily discovered. Plummetts are very necessary articles, and the man who often goes a-fishing will do well to have one in a pocket of each of his fishing-

coats. When forgotten, a stone, penknife, or bunch of keys are sometimes made to answer the same purpose. If the keys catch in a weed, and the line breaks, the angler never afterwards forgets his plummet. There are two or three machines made called depth-gauges; they answer their purpose, but I do not think them necessary, and for some reasons they are even undesirable.

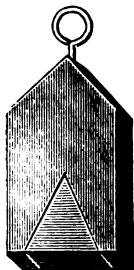


FIG. 17. PLUMMET.

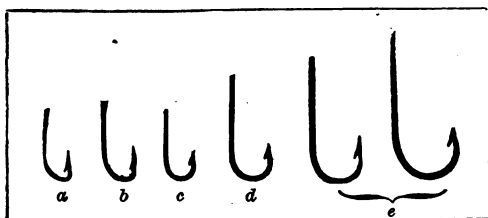
The disgorger is a most useful instrument, by the aid of which hooks are inveigled out of fishes' mouths. The best are made as shown in Fig. 18. Either end is used, according to circumstances; usually the twisted end is preferred. The line is got into the centre of the twist, and the disgorger run down right on to the hook wherever it is buried in the fish; the line should then be twisted round the disgorger, and a turn of the wrist brings the hook away—an affair of five seconds where fingers are not all thumbs. It is not a bad plan, in lieu of the forked end, to turn the end of the wire into a ring. The disgorger can then be fastened by a cord to a buttonhole. For pike something stronger is wanted.

Among the sundries are metal boxes for gentles and other bait. These should be large, but flat, to go conveniently into the pocket, and be pierced with plenty of air-holes. Several neat little arrangements for holding bait, which can be strapped on to the waist, are sold at the tackle-shops, and when the angler walks and fishes will be found useful. Bags are the best worm containers. Then the angler requires winders on which to keep his lines, a book for hooks, or winder and hook-book combined. Of these the tackle-shops offer a pleasing variety, suited to all sorts and conditions of men and purses. The angler should also carry a pair of sharp pocket-scissors; cobbler's- or bee's-wax, wrapped in a piece of leather; binding silk, fine but strong; and varnish for

FIG. 18.
IMPROVED
DISGORGER.

bindings of hooks, &c. (see page 20). As to creels, baskets, and bags, the angler may please himself. My idea of a creel is one with a flat top, on which I can sit, with a partition, horizontal or perpendicular, to divide my lunch, tobacco, &c., from any fish I may catch. For bottom fishing, one of large size is often required.

I believe I have now mentioned all the tackle that is generally requisite for coarse fish; but in their appropriate places one or two special articles will be found described. To go into all the modifications of tackle which circumstances occasionally render necessary would require a volume three times as large as this. The angler must have a certain amount of ingenuity in him to be worth his salt, and in no branch of angling is his ingenuity of more use to him than in bottom fishing. He should always be asking himself: Can I safely fish any finer? Is not my line too coarse? Have I not too many shots on? Is not my float too large? If the line can with safety be finer, it is too coarse; if the bait will keep the bottom with less shot, too many shot are on the line; and if a smaller float can be used, the one on the line is too large. Whatever happens—and queer things do happen out fishing—invent something to meet the emergency. Never fold your hands and say “It’s no good.” I know heaps of men who go fishing who hardly know one end of the rod from the other, and yet they catch fish—for the simple reason, that they fish with other people’s brains. There is my good friend, worthy Sir Cræsus Goldstick, who, when he retires to his country seat on the Norfolk Broads, after the labours of the Session, has an hour or two at the bream. His skilful keeper finds a good swim, baits it, arranges the tackle, moors the boat, baits the hook, and lands the fish. Sir Cræsus lifts the rod when the float goes under, pulls till the fish comes to the surface, and, thinking himself an angler, boasts of his catch. Bah! his keeper was the angler, and Sir Cræsus a mere automaton doing his bidding. I say, no man should call himself an angler unless he can catch fish without a skilled assistant to do the greater part of the work for him.



ROACH HOOKS (actual size).—a, for two gentles; b, for three gentles, red worm, or silk-weed; c, for small pellet of paste, or grain of wheat; d, for large pellet of paste; e, for lobworms, or very large paste baits.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROACH (*Leuciscus rutilus*).

Roach-fishing a Fine Art—A Summer Day's Roach-fishing—Baits and Ground-bait—Finding a Swim—Float-fishing in Thames Style—Playing and Landing Fish—A Jack in the Swim—Nottingham Fishing—Tight Corking, and Legering with a Float—Fishing with Silk-weed—Punt-fishing—Legering for Roach—Fishing in High and Coloured Water—Catching, Scouring, and Keeping Lob-worms—Winter Fishing—Roach-fishing in Lakes, Ponds, Meres, and Canals.

THE roach—called in Cheshire the roach-dace—is the most popular of the coarse fish. It abounds in almost every lake, pond, canal, and quiet-running stream in England, but is not found in Ireland. It affords capital sport on the fine tackle essential to its capture, and in autumn and winter, if skilfully cooked, is not altogether uneatable. It is a remarkably handsome fish, being for the most part silvery, eyes, fins, and tail tinged with red, but, as with all other fish, the back is the darkest portion—a steely blue or green, quickly turning to silver on the sides and belly. The scales are rather large, and are easily displaced. In weight roach vary from a few ounces to about 3½lb., but one of 2lb. is very rarely captured, and probably not two anglers out of 500 have ever seen a roach that size. Small roach are sometimes mistaken for rudd, and *vice versâ*. They are, however, easily distinguished by a glance at their mouths. Roach have projecting top lips, which come

down when required to pick food off the bottom. Rudd have a hard, bony, immovable top lip, and the under lip projects. Hybrids between roach and rudd are not unknown.

I want it to be understood at the outset that roach-fishing, so far as the larger fish are concerned, is not a very simple operation. It is the fashion with a certain number of fly-fishers, more especially those who fish exclusively for salmon, to talk somewhat slightly of roach-fishing, and of bottom fishing generally. Now the truth is that in respect of clear-flowing rivers which are often visited by anglers, roach-fishing has been quite as much reduced, or rather elevated, to a fine art, as salmon-fishing, if not more so. The difficulties of getting the fish to take the bait are certainly not less with roach than with salmon, and there is not so great a difference as might be supposed in the skill required after the fish are hooked. The salmon-fisher plays his twenty-pounder with the strongest gut; the roach-fisher plays his one-and-a-half-pounder on gut finer than hair. Let the two change rods, and I warrant the roach has a better chance of escape than the salmon. But if you agree with me that the skill displayed by the roach-fisher is, in its way as much to be admired as that exhibited by the salmon-fisher, I will gladly grant that the salmon-fisher has the advantage in respect of the splendid exercise his favourite sport enables him to enjoy, the lovely scenery through which it takes him, and the glorious battles which every now and again he wages with the king of fresh-water fish.

To come to the more practical portions of my subject, roach swim in shoals varying from a dozen to an uncountable number, and usually feed close to the bottom. There are, broadly speaking, two methods of fishing on or near the bottom for roach: first, with float tackle; second, with leger tackle. Both plans are capable of many variations, and occasionally the two are combined. The exact method to be followed depends on the time of year and the character of the swim, the skilful angler varying his tackle accordingly. In ordinary float-fishing from the bank, either the light rod with the extra butt—mentioned on page 13—can be used, or the rods made specially for the purpose (see p. 14). If the angler fishes

in the Nottingham fashion, or with the leger, the light rod, without the extra butt, will be found to answer the purpose admirably; but Nottingham anglers use light wood rods, made expressly for their peculiar kind of fishing. Personally, I am not wedded to either the Nottingham style or any other, but always use Nottingham reels and lines (see pp. 16 and 17), so that I can fish any way I like; and when I fail with one plan, I try another.

Let us now go for a summer day's roach-fishing, during which I will do my best to explain how to find the fish, and the various ways of catching them. By following this plan I believe I shall be able to give all the necessary information in a readable and easily-understood form.

It is the end of July, and the roach are now in condition. We are going to a stream which is new to us, so devote a portion of the previous day to getting ready various baits which we may possibly require. In the first place, we prepare about half a pint of wheat for bait, by placing it in a large covered jar, full of cold water, in the oven, and letting it stew gently from three to five hours, adding *cold* water about once an hour, as the wheat quickly takes up the water, and it is important not to let it dry. The wheat can hardly cook too slowly. If prepared with care, it swells up to about the size of a pea and bursts, showing a little streak of white. If done too much, the inside boils out. The empty husks are not much use as bait. Of course, there are many methods of stewing wheat, but the jar-in-oven plan is the safest.* Instead of wheat, we can use lightly-dried malt—which is sometimes preferred by the roach—or pearl barley. A bait more used for roach than any other (paste excepted) is the gentle—larva of the bluebottle fly. We purchase a store of these from an obliging butcher's assistant, who, by keeping them in bran or damp sand for a few days, in a dark, cool place—a cellar for preference—has caused them to become clean and pleasant to use. Some few anglers

* Another good method is to soak the wheat for twelve hours, rub it in a coarse canvas bag until the husks are removed, and then stew the remainder of the grain very gently in milk. Another plan is to place a bag of wheat in a mash-tub for a few hours.

believe that gentles are more attractive to the fish when fresh from feeding on putrid flesh, but I much prefer them well scoured.

It is the easiest possible thing to raise a stock of gentles in summer, but residents in town are advised not to make the attempt. A piece of bullock's liver, or a dead fish or rat, hung up in a warm, shady place out of doors, out of the way of cats, quickly attracts crowds of blow-flies. In one or two days the thing will be sufficiently "blown." It should then be placed on some sand, in an earthenware pan with a glazed interior, or in an old lard tin, kept in the shade, and covered with a piece of wire netting, to keep off cats, dogs, and rats. In warm weather the gentles may be almost seen to grow. As they eat the stuff they are bred in, fresh food should be given them, or they quickly turn into the chrysalis state, and are then not much use.* Those required for baiting the hooks can be kept in bran or sand for a few days, and some nicely scoured ones are generally to be found in the sand at the bottom of the pan. Scoured gentles keep longest in a cellar or other cool, dark place. The sides of the pan have to be kept quite dry, or the gentles will crawl out. To keep gentles in winter two plans are adopted: The first is to half fill a good sized tub with damp sand or garden loam, get some liver, fly-blown, as late in the year as possible, and lay the liver on the top of the soil. The pan should be placed in a dark place, and the gentles be well fed on anything in the nature of meat. Many of them will bury themselves in the soil. The other plan, which is less trouble, but hardly so effective, is to cork up full-grown gentles in a bottle full of garden soil, and bury the bottle until wanted.

Well, our wheat is boiled and gentles scoured; but to be on the safe side, we get from the stable-boy a few redworms, which, in anticipation of our visit, he obtained from a very old dunghheap, and has kept for three days in damp moss to scour. Before going to bed we put in soak any old crusts that are in the bread-pan, and perhaps prevail on the cook to boil us a teacupful of rice,

* Dace are more partial to the chrysalis than roach. A compound bait—gentle on shank, and chrysalis on point of hook—is sometimes successful.

to add to the attractiveness of our ground-bait. We also take a glance through Chapter II. of this book, and make up some float tackle, but leave a good deal to be finally arranged until we reach the water's side, for, having never fished this particular river, we hardly know its character and the tackle we shall want.

The following morning we are up at daybreak, and find our man, John, busy at work on the ground-bait. The basinful of soaked bread he has thoroughly emptied of water, and, after squeezing the crusts, has rubbed them into *very small* fragments. To the bread he adds the boiled rice, a few handfuls of meal, and with some bran works up the mixture into stiff balls. (N.B.—The bread and bran alone make excellent ground-bait; or bread, bran, and clay; or even bran and clay.) The dog-cart is now at the door, and into it go our impedimenta, which consist of creel, landing-net and handle, light rod with extra butt (see page 13), our tackle-book, containing on a winder two or three made-up lines (see page 25), some 2yd. lengths of very fine gut and brown horsehair, and a few dozen No. 9 to No. 12 Crystal and Round Bend hooks, some with shanks painted white, others red (see page 20). Two or three light, quill floats, of various sizes, also find a place in our creel; and we must by no means forget the plummet, the disgorging, our bait-box containing gentles, the worm-bag, a large slice of bread and a crust (both from a stale loaf, or a French roll, which is excellent for making paste), the wheat in a bag, and the ground-bait also in a large bag. We put in a duster, to wipe our hands upon if we catch any fish and have to unhook them ourselves. We have prepared no less than four kinds of bait, because we do not know the water, nor what baits are likely to take best. One of us has some peculiar paste all to himself, and greatly believes in its killing powers. It is made simply of flour, a little sugar, and vermilion, mixed up with gin into a stiff paste. In some waters it kills well.

After the sultry night—during which we lay awake for the most part, excited by some talk of mighty fish, which we had listened to after dinner—the drive through the cool air of early morning, between the hedges bediamonded with dewdrops.

and smelling sweetly of wild honeysuckle, is very enjoyable. There is no wind, but a few clouds to the southward give promise of a shower or two during the day. The nine miles and a half from the house to the river are covered in something under the hour, and, almost before we know it, we are standing knee deep in rich meadow grass, putting our rods together. The ferrules of the rods we always keep rubbed with vaseline or soft soap, or any kind of grease, to prevent them sticking. On the butt of the rod we fix the small Nottingham winch (see page 16), with the handles to the right when the reel is hanging below the rod, and we draw the fine twisted or plaited silk line through the rod rings. Being so far ready, the next thing to do is

To Find a Swim—a subject on which a good-sized volume might easily be written. The river is, let us say, about 30yds. wide, slow flowing, with here and there reed beds and islands. About a mile above us is a weir and mill, and the same distance below us the river is also dammed up about 4ft. for the purpose of turning another mill. If we walk down stream, we shall find the water get deeper; if we walk up stream, we are certain to find it more shallow. What we require is a swim from 5ft. to 10ft. deep, so near the bank as to be fishable with our 15ft. rods—a swim where the bottom is of gravel or sand, and level for a few yards, and where weeds or reeds, or both, grow in the immediate neighbourhood. It should also be *out of the wind* for if the surface of the water is ruffled, many of the largest fish will be missed, as they bite most gently, hardly moving the float. Above all, there must be some stream, for at this season we do not find roach in still water, except it be in a lake, canal, or pond. Where we stand the river widens out, and a mudbank, on which weeds grow luxuriantly, stretches out some 20ft. from the shore. If we had a boat we might find a gravelly bottom on the edge of the weeds, but we have to walk farther before we can fish from the bank. About half a mile up stream I espy a good-sized eyot, and I know from experience that where the river is thus divided the stream often runs sharply on both sides of it, and cuts a clean channel close into the banks, thus forming an easily reached swim. Besides, fish always lie about such spots,

one reason, no doubt, being that in case of a flood there is a safe place for them in the eddy always to be found at the tail of an island.

We soon arrive opposite the eyot. The bank on which we stand is steep, and there is probably a good depth of water close under it. At one point a few reeds grow, then comes a gap, then a few more reeds. Between the two reed-beds is just the place for roach, if only the depth and bottom are suitable for float-fishing. To test the swim, I attach the float tackle, shown on page 25, to the end of my running line, fasten a plummet to the hook, and let it into the water. The plummet sinks sharply, and hits the ground with a knock—the bottom is good. With a very little practice the difference between a mud and a hard bottom can thus be easily determined, unless the water is very deep. For plumbing in deep water anglers sometimes scoop a hollow in the bottom of the plummet, and fill it with tallow, to which the sand, gravel, or mud, as the case may be, sticks. The depth I find to be about 6ft., and by plumbing at three different spots, a yard apart, I find that the bottom is fairly level. All this while I have been careful not to show myself more than is necessary, and pursue my investigations very quietly; neither have I shaken the bank by heavy footfalls. The sun is in my face, so that my shadow is not thrown into the water. While I was taking the line off the winder I stood some distance back from the river, and it was not until my float tackle was fastened on to the running line that I sat on my basket, just opposite the top of the swim, and commenced to plumb the depth. While thus examining the swim, I was careful to do what is usually the first operation in float-fishing, namely, adjust my float to a proper distance from the hook. As a general rule, when the plummet is on the bottom, and—the line being held taut—the top of the float is just level with the surface of the water, the float is in its right place on the line. Unfortunately, the swim is deeper lower down than it is opposite to me, so I had to put my float higher up the line; for it is much more important to have the right depth in the middle and end of the swim than at the commencement. Before commencing to fish I take a wooden lucifer match, split it in half, and tie a small portion of it on to the running line, about

5ft. above the float (see Fig. 19). After my hook is baited I shall wind up my line until the reel is stopped by the match catching against the top ring. By this means the line will be kept from falling into loops between the top ring and the reel,



FIG. 19. TIGHT-LINE FISHING WITH RUNNING TACKLE BY MEANS OF A LUCIFER MATCH.

and I shall be enabled to strike much sharper than I could if there was any slack line between the rings. Only very careful anglers adopt this plan. The next thing is

Baiting the Hook.—I begin by using gentles. The hook is a small one—about No. 10 Crystal Bend, with the shank painted white (see page 20)—and on it I draw two gentles, not threading them on from head to tail, but catching them by a small piece of skin on the side. (When I have many bites, but few fish, I sometimes put on a No. 13 hook, and attach by the tail a large gentle, which wriggles as it goes down the stream, and sometimes proves very killing.) I then take a trial swim, dropping my tackle very carefully and lightly into the water, to see if the bottom is clear.* If the bottom is foul my hook catches, and my float is forced under by the current; but this swim is clear, and, laying down my rod, I leave my tackle in the water to soak while I prepare my ground-bait. If I had been acquainted with this swim, I should have thrown in some ground-bait before baiting my hook, but not before plumbing the depth.

With regard to hook-baits for roach, those really required are paste, gentles, and worms; one of these three will kill almost anywhere. But other baits are, on occasions, equally killing, namely, cubes of the inner bread-crust toughened by damp, wasp-grubs (baked in the oven, or boiled in milk), caddis (the larvæ of various water-flies, easily found in ditches), boiled wheat or pearl barley, the white portions of greaves boiled, and blow-flies used under water. A few weeks ago a friend persuaded me to try earwigs. I did so, and found them kill

*If an otherwise good roach-swim is spoilt by a few weeds, the vigorous use of a gudgeon-rake (see Chap. VIII.), a few hours before the swim is fished, will vastly improve the swim by clearing away weeds and rubbish.

rather better than any other bait we were using. That happened in the Loddon. (See also page 49.)

To return to the riverside. I find my man has made up

The Ground-bait in rather large balls, so I break a lamp in half, make a hole in the centre, put in a dozen gentles, and squeeze it up into a ball about the size of an egg. If I am very anxious to catch fish, I do not throw this ball in, as most anglers do, and make a splash which frightens the timid roach, but squeeze it on my line, just above the hook, swing it out over the water, and let it sink gently to the bottom. As soon as its journey has ended, I raise the point of the rod, and jerk the hook out of the ball of bait. My float and bait then travel down the stream, my two gentles appear a part of the ground-bait, and I very likely get a fish the first swim.

To be able to judge when the ground-bait reaches the bottom is very important, for the angler who fishes in one place, while his ground-bait is in another, catches few fish. *The hook-bait should always travel right over, and in a line with, the ground-bait.* I know no plan which enables the angler to judge more correctly just where the ground-bait falls than the one I have described. Three small balls of ground-bait should be dropped in at starting, and, unless the roach are biting very fast, a piece about a quarter the size after every three fish are taken. If the stream is strong, it will be necessary to put a stone inside each ball to make it sink; while, on the other hand, if there is hardly any stream, the ground-bait may be thrown in loose, not made into balls at all. It is not desirable for the ground-bait to fall just opposite the angler, for it is as well to keep the fish a little distance off. The nearer the fish are, the worse they feed. One great point in successful bottom fishing is to mix up with the ground-bait some of whatever is used on the hook. If a lot of bread and bran is being eaten by the fish, the more experienced of them will view with suspicion a solitary couple of gentles; but if to the bread and bran some gentles are added, then the fish feed on bread, bran, and gentles as a matter of course, and probably take the two in which the hook is partially hidden. When I have been ground-baiting with soaked crusts and bran, and have

been fishing with gentles, but have had so few of these latter that I could not add any to the ground-bait, I have often met with poor success until I tried as hook-bait a fragment of inner crust (*broken*, not cut, off the loaf), which, of course, resembled a piece of the ground-bait as nearly as possible.

Having put in three balls of ground-bait, each with a few gentles inside, I begin fishing. The tackle is dropped into the water just in front of me, and allowed to pass quietly down with the stream. I am careful to neither check the float nor let any line lie on the surface of the water. When the float has gone as far as the line will allow, I lift it out of the water with a *slight* turn of the wrist, which would cause any fish that might be holding on to the bait at the end of the swim to be hooked. I repeat the process—not a bite! and I take four swims before anything happens. The roach, probably, are not there, but they may come yet, for the shoals do not remain stationary when on the feed. In the middle of the fifth swim I notice that my float is checked for an instant. Before it can go under I give a slight upward movement of the wrist, and at once feel I have something on, and I have the pleasure of playing and landing the fish.

It should be stated, as regards roach-bites, that the angler cannot strike too soon. Large roach do not, as a rule (they do sometimes), bite boldly. They are so cautious in taking the bait that often only the slightest movement of the float is discernible. If a roach goes off with the bait, the float of course goes under, but the roach immediately leaves go on feeling the pull of the float, and the angler strikes too late. If the float is only checked a little, or inclines to one side or the other, the angler should strike. Mind, I am talking of large, shy, river roach, not of the hungry little fellows who would swallow rod, angler, and all, if their stomachs were only as large as their appetites. Half the secret of successful roach-fishing lies in the strike, and on this portion of the subject I can usefully add nothing more, for the art of striking can only be learnt by practice. An experienced roach-fisher will detect bites when a beginner would see no sign of movement in the float. As a rule, the farther the angler is from the fish the bolder they bite.

Well, I have hooked my first fish, so now proceed to play him. He is of some size, for he makes for the centre of the river, and forces me to allow him to run several yards of line off my reel. I have to keep an even strain on his mouth, never slacking the line an instant, and to play him without disturbing the other fish, and I endeavour to keep him near the top of the water without breaking the surface. If he played near the bottom, the shoal of roach might take warning by the fate of their brother, and if he kicked about on the surface they would also be startled. In trout-fishing it is usual to play the fish down stream, and with good reason; but seated on my creel, I am obliged to bring this roach up stream, as far away from the swim as I can reach. As soon as he appears exhausted with his struggles, I raise the point of the rod, *letting out some line** off the reel, and, holding the rod in my left hand, and my landing-net in my right hand, bring him close under the bank. Then I *sink my landing-net*, bring the fish over it, raise the net, and fish No. 1 is caught. During the next quarter of an hour I catch five fish, but as they run small I determine to try

Wheat as a Bait, and failing that, paste, for I have noticed that in some rivers very few large roach take gentles, while dozens of small fish may be caught on that bait. The first thing to do is to change my hook for an ordinary No. 11 Round Bend one, the shank of which has been painted white. The gut on which the new hook is whipped is curly, and I first moisten it in my mouth, and then draw it out straight. Persons--and there are a few--who never acquire the knack of straightening gut should carry a fragment of pure india-rubber in their pocket. Gut rubbed with indiarubber quickly loses its curly properties. Cobbler's heelball is useful for the same purpose. Well, the hook is on, and before putting,

* Thames and Lea roach-fishers usually angle with what is termed a tight line--i.e., without running tackle. When landing fish, they have simply to remove the butt of the rod, or, if the swim is shallow, the second joint, when they can easily bring the fish to the landing-net. The only objection I can see to using running tackle with a long, roach rod, is that to land the fish without being able to shorten the rod is a little inconvenient. I have, however, sometimes seen bank-anglers, when they were using running tackle, remove their butts when landing fish, and I have occasionally done the same thing after playing the fish nearly dead.

or throwing, the used hook away, I carefully notice if the gut on the new hook is the same length as the gut on the old one, and if there is any difference, I shift my float accordingly. A slight change in the ground-bait is necessary, for I want to get the fish to look upon wheat as a very proper and safe food. This view they will not take if they simply see the grain on my hook. I therefore break up some ground-bait, and make up three small balls, mixing in as much wheat as I can. The ground-bait I let in gently by means of my line as before, and I also throw in from time to time a dozen or more grains of wheat some yards above my swim, so that they reach the bottom at the spot where I am fishing. For my hook I select a plump, full grain, just bursting its shell, and put the hook point in at one end of the white streak, and just out at the other, so that, immediately I strike, the point of the hook catches the fish's mouth. To cover the point with the husk of the grain is fatal to success. Sometimes, when the wheat is badly cooked, and the inside is almost boiled out, I am obliged to put the hook point into the husk; but even then I am careful that the point comes through. Sometimes two grains answer better than one, and when the fish are shy it is an admirable plan—one I have followed for some years—to thread a gentle up the shank of the hook, and cover the bend with a grain of wheat.

When roach are very plentiful, or a shoal is in some hole which it has no inclination to leave, the throwing in of a few grains well above the swim, every few minutes, serves quite as well to keep the fish together, and on the feed, as the more elaborate ground-bait. On the best day's roach-fishing I ever had in my life my hook-bait was wheat, and my ground-bait also wheat, thrown in loose. A great many skilful anglers use brewers' grains as ground-bait when fishing with wheat, but I much prefer the plan just described.

About nine o'clock the roach suddenly cease to feed, and after trying various little dodges without success, I come to the conclusion that either their feeding-time is over for the morning, or that there is

A Jack in the Swim.—Jack, or pike, eat roach, and in

summer usually have their lairs in weeds and reed-beds, so that the corner where I am fishing is a particularly likely place for one of these fish. To put the matter to the test, I fix the joints of my second rod together (see page 13), and not having proper jack tackle with me, I tie my plummet on to the end of the running line, and a foot above the plummet tie on a hook, mounted on gimp, which is fortunately in my book. My last fish happened to be small, and is still alive, so I put the hook through both its lips, and drop it into the water, close to the reeds. "I will give the jack five minutes," I think to myself, "and meanwhile there is time for a pipe." However, before my pipe is even out of my pocket I see a shaking of the line, followed by a downward movement of the rod-top. I wait a second, then up with the point, hold on for a moment, to get the hook well in, and I am playing a fine Jack of half a dozen pounds. "No wonder the roach were frightened," think I, as he comes to the top, and opens his ugly mouth at me. Not for a moment must I let the line slack. All through must an even pressure be kept on the fish's mouth. Soon he tires, and my landing-net is brought into requisition. There is not much chance of roach for half an hour after this disturbance, so shifting my quarters, and espying a suitable swim, I do a little

Nottingham Fishing.—I am now going to fish some distance from the bank—about 25ft. out—and the water is somewhat heavier than in my other swim. Slightly heavier tackle is therefore necessary, so I take a larger set of float tackle off my winder—that is to say, tackle with more shot and a larger float. Another reason for preferring heavier tackle is that its weight renders it easier to cast. When changing tackles, I leave the first tackle on the grass, near my old swim, and am careful not to move the float, so that when I return there will be no occasion to plumb the depth for a second time. I also remove the piece of match from my line, and shorten the rod by taking off the extra butt. The depth of the new swim has now to be discovered. To use the plummet here is impossible. Of course I put the float as near as I can guess at the depth, rather higher than lower, and cast out my tackle baited with

gentles—the hook point *covered*—to the top of the swim. The float cocks, goes on its way down stream for a few feet, then bobs several times, and finally goes under. From this I know that my bait is touching the bottom, but that my shots are off the bottom; for if they touched the ground, the float would not cock, but would lie in a horizontal position on the water. I am therefore not more on the bottom than the distance between the shot and the hook, so I lower my float about 4in., and try another swim. This time the float goes serenely to its journey's end. I may now be too far off the bottom, so I heighten the float 2in. Again the tackle passes down the swim without incident, and I know that I am within 2in. of the right depth, which is near enough. I hope I have made this plumbing-without-a-plummet matter quite clear. It is, though troublesome, a very simple operation, and one which must be understood and practised. Success in bottom fishing depends a great deal on having the bait at the proper depth.

I have said "cast out the tackle," but I may very properly be asked, how. With heavy floats and many shot the line runs off the reel as the tackle is cast out, but with this light roach-tackle a different plan must be adopted. Face the swim; look rather up stream than down; hold the rod in the right hand, with that hand above the reel and the little finger touching the rim of the reel, to act as a check.* Point the rod up stream, pull some line off the reel, and catch the loop on a finger of the left hand (Fig. 20, 1). From the point of the rod to the hook, the length should be from 6ft. to 8ft., according to the depth of the swim. At greater depths a slider float (see page 26) is used. These details so far carried out, move the right hand backwards, bringing the point of the rod away from the river; then move it quickly forward, and swing the tackle out in the direction of the swim. As the tackle reaches the end of its swing, just before it is checked, let the line off the finger

* A great many Nottingham anglers check the reel with the first finger, the hand being, of course, below the reel. Casting from the right shoulder, they place the right hand above the reel and the left hand below it, and check the reel with the first finger of the left hand; casting from the left shoulder, the hands are reversed, and the reel is checked with the first finger of the right hand. Personally, I prefer to always have my right hand above the reel, and to keep the little finger of that hand on the rim of the reel.

of the left hand, and away the tackle shoots over the river, and alights at the top of the swim. This is for a short cast. No. 2 in the illustration indicates how the line should be held for an extra long cast. Two loops have then to be held in the left hand (one on the first finger, the other on the second finger), and the higher loop has to be released a second before the one next the reel. I sometimes even take three loops into my left

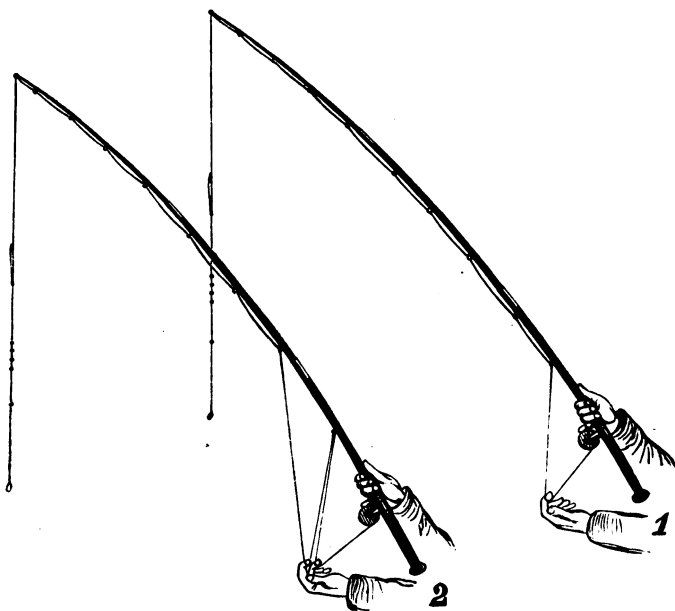


FIG. 20. CASTING IN THE NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

hand; but to cast with more than one requires a good deal of practice. Not a few Nottingham fishermen pull out the loops of line from between rings about the middle of the rod, but I believe the plan shown in the sketch to be the most handy.

As soon as the tackle touches the water the point of the rod is lowered, but immediately the float has cocked, line is let out, and the rod is held at an angle of about 45deg. Light

F

float tackle, as it goes down the stream, will draw the fine line through the rings, but will not pull it off the reel, so the reel has to be turned with the hand; but when rather heavy tackle is used, in deep, quick streams, the arrangement works automatically. When the float has travelled about 10yds., the line is wound in and a fresh cast made. If the day is wet, I do anything rather than fish in the Nottingham style, for the fine, undressed silk line clings to the rod, the float gets checked, the fish, in consequence, scared, and the angler's temper ruffled.*

As I am going to fish with wheat, I attach a small ball of ground-bait, loaded with wheat, to my hook, and swing it to the top of the swim, and from time to time throw in a few grains of wheat. At the second swim I take a fish, and continue to have good sport for half an hour. Then the roach get shy, and as an experiment I throw some wheat in lower down the swim, and let my float travel 5yds. farther than it did before, or 15yds. in all. By throwing in my ground-bait lower, I get the fish to feed farther away from me, and the result is that, though the sun is now well up over my head, they bite less shyly, and I bring some more to basket. About midday I stroll towards my companions, with a view of learning when and where we are to lunch, and discover one of them busily engaged in

"Tight-corking," or Legering with a Float, by which means he has caught fewer, but finer, roach than I have. I use the expression "tight-corking," but it does not exactly express what my friend is doing, for he is using a quill, not a cork, float, and in lieu of the shot which Nottingham tight-corkers (this is the first time I ever spoke of anybody

* Anglers of the Thames and Lea, and of the Trent, all assert that their respective styles are best. In this they are incorrect, and the "all-round" angler will do well to adopt the method best suited to any particular swim. The Thames and Lea style—the characteristics of which are the long rod and the tight line, i.e., no running tackle—is best adapted for quiet swims, moderately deep, near the bank, where the angler can sit well back, out of sight of the fish. In a shallow, swift swim, the rod in the Lea style being held just over the roach, would act as a scarecrow. In such swims the Trent or Nottingham method should be followed. In the Thames and Lea style, the angler can on a calm day detect the slightest bite, and instantly strike, and in a swim suited to that style of fishing catches four roach to the Nottingham angler's one; but not so in shallow, swift streams.

as a "tight-corker") put on their lines, he uses a small bullet, which can slip *up* the line, but is prevented from going *down* it by a very small shot, bitten 18in. or more above the hook. His plan of working this tackle is very similar to that followed by the aforesaid tight-corkers. Need I explain that tight-corking is sending float tackle down stream to a certain point, and there checking it, a foot or more of gut being on the bottom (see also page 78). My friend's method is, as I said, similar, but better. He chose a swim where the bottom was very uneven, and where the stream, owing to a prominence in the bank, set out a little, and formed a small eddy. The eddy was almost full of water lilies, and

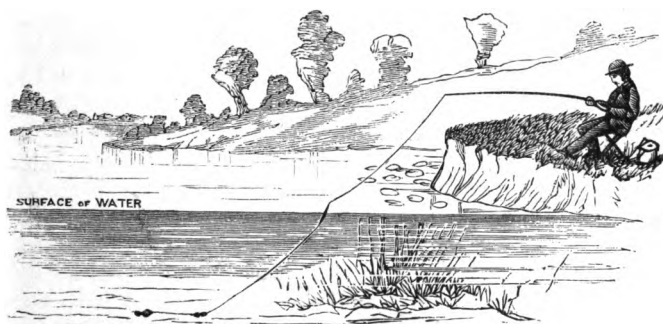


FIG. 21. FISHING WITH LEGER FLOAT TACKLE ON EDGE OF EDDY

just on the edge of the stream, about 2ft. from the lilies, he cast in his tackle and waited patiently for results. When plumbing the depth, he so arranged the float that the distance from the float to the bullet was a few inches more than the distance from the surface of the water to the bottom. The depth was about 8ft.; had it been more, he would have been obliged to use a slider float (see page 26). A glance at the sketch (Fig. 21) will give a fairly good idea of the position of the tackle. My friend's bait is a good-sized lump of paste, which he is careful to mould on to the hook (a short-shanked No. 6 Round Bend) in such a way that the point comes through with the slightest touch (see Fig. 22).

The shank of the hook is painted white, so that it will not be noticeable should the paste get washed away. This paste is made at the waterside, in a simple fashion, by wetting a portion of the crumb of a stale loaf, or French roll, and then well squeezing it in a handkerchief and kneading it. When made, it is best kept in a damp rag, and not exposed to the light, or it turns a drab colour. If made at home, it is as well to pound it in a pestle and mortar. The ground-bait is the bread-and-bran mixture similar to that which I was using. None is thrown in, but as often as may be necessary a small lump is pressed round a very small shot on the line, about 4in. from the hook, so that when the affair is let into the water the hook-bait is certain to lie close to the ground-bait—no small advantage.* Every few minutes my friend throws in a small pellet of paste well above his float, so that it may sink as near his bait as he can judge. His method is eminently adapted to catch big fish. He can keep very quiet, takes the line out of the water only when he has a bite or a fish, fishes close to his ground-bait, and almost immediately above his hook, and there is no line and row of shots as there is in the float tackle I have been using. Truly an admirable method! After watching my friend land a couple of "whoppers," we have lunch together, and I return to my old swim, from which the roach had been frightened by the jack. The sun now comes out strongly, and the fish soon cease feeding, so I again join my friend, and we stroll up the river until we come to a weir, on the shallows below which are two anglers, both of whom are catching roach. One is fly-fishing with a good-sized red palmer, and catches not only roach (which in a few rivers will take a fly),† but also chub and dace. The other we find is using



FIG. 22. HOOK
BAITED WITH
PASTE.

Silk Weed (*Conferva rivularis*), orow silk, or flannel weed,

* Some anglers who use this tackle omit the ground-bait on the line, and place a fragment of cork a couple of inches above the hook. This keeps the bait off the bottom, which is occasionally an advantage.

† See account of "Fly-fishing for Rudd," Chapter XII. The method is similar.

a very killing bait in the hot months. He has taken his station at the side of the weir, where he can reach a quiet eddy. The depth is about 8ft., and the stream is so slight that he is able to fish without shots. To make his float cock, he has simply twisted a short length of lead wire round the end of it (self-cocking floats are sold ready weighted). His line is of the finest-drawn gut, and the shank of his hook (No. 9) is coloured green by means of green sealing-wax dissolved in spirits of wine. With his landing-net handle he has rubbed off a few bits of the weed from the weir, and, after washing it well, winds small pieces round his hook. He tells us that the larger the bait, the larger the fish he takes, and he certainly has some fine specimens in his creel. He says the silk weed is a better bait near weirs than elsewhere, probably because it is natural for the fish to find pieces of the weed in such places. "I often cut open roach to find out on what they are feeding," he adds, "and all the fish I catch in the weir-pool are stuffed with this weed." We have a long chat with this angler, who is an enthusiast, and he tells us of several baits to try when the ordinary ones fail; among others, caddis, mealworms—especially good in mill-tails—small cubes of banana, fresh-water shrimps, dried sheep's blood, and small cubes of boiled pork—the last two as winter baits.

Our conversation is put an end to by the appearance of the keeper, who tells us that he has a punt, which he will gladly place at our disposal if we feel inclined to do a little

Punt-fishing in the Thames Style.—He further offers to take us to a first-rate pitch where the fish, which run large, have not seen a line this season. The offer is too tempting to be refused; we are soon on board our flat-bottomed craft, which is divided into two unequal portions by what is termed a well—*i.e.*, a division into which the water flows freely, used for holding live-baits for jack, trout, and perch. The well is placed about one-third of the way from the stern, and on each side of it is a comfortable Windsor chair.

In due course we come to the promised swim, and see at a glance that it is a good one. At this point the river is very weedy, but just in the centre is a narrow run, not quite as

deep as the punt is long. By the grate of the punt pole we can hear that the bottom is sandy gravel. The keeper takes great pains not to disturb the fish while moving the punt. Just before arriving at the swim he lets the punt swing across the stream, over the weeds on the left hand, and going up into the bows, takes a very heavy pole, called a rypeck, pointed with iron, and drives it into the bottom, at the point A (Fig. 23). As he does so, the punt swings round into the position shown in the first diagram. As soon as one pole is in he takes up another, drops it gently overboard, on the left side, about the middle, and pushes the punt across and rather up stream, the pole A, of course, coming nearly to the stern of the punt, where

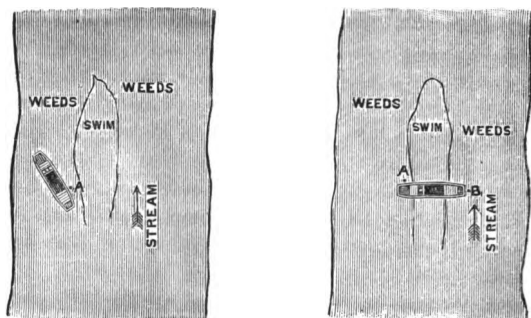


FIG. 23. MOORING A THAMES PUNT.

my friend fastens it with a piece of cord. In the meantime the punt swings at right angles to the stream, the second pole is fixed in at the point B, and tied at the end of the bows.*

After the punt is moored, my companion and I remain quietly on our Windsor chairs, and the keeper takes his seat between us, on the lid of the well. By his direction we put our floats (we are using our light rods, without the extra butt) 6ft. or so from the hook, and then plumb the depth. Having done so as quietly as possible, we find

* In the Eastern Counties the boat or punt is usually moored down, and not across, the stream; the anglers then sit facing the opposite bank of the river, and are, as regards the stream, in the same position as they would be on the bank

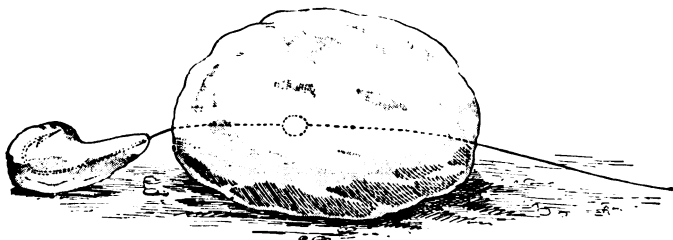
we have to shift the float only a few inches higher up the line. I should say that, the stream here being rather swift, we have put on larger floats, which carry more shot, and by the keeper's advice we place one very small shot about 6in. above the hook. As soon as we have the depth, the keeper takes two balls of our ground-bait, squeezes a small stone into the middle of each, and puts them overboard, exactly in a line with me, and two more in a line with my companion. He then baits our hooks with two gentles, and the fun begins. We drop the tackle in close to the punt, and are very particular to let as little line fall on the water as possible. At the end of each swim we strike gently, sometimes by this means hooking a cautious roach, which is holding the bait in its mouth without moving the float.

After a while, the roach we are catching not running as large as the keeper led us to expect, I determine to try creed wheat (see page 33), but before doing so throw in a few handfuls of wheat, as far behind me up stream as I can. By the time the current sweeps these grains into our swim they are almost on the bottom, and the fish are feeding on them. I now bait carefully with a grain of wheat, and catch several roach of better size than those which took the gentles. As soon as they go off the feed I throw in a few more grains, well up stream, and bring them on again. My friend continues using gentles, and is annoyed by a shoal of bleak—fish not unlike sprats—which will not let his bait alone, and prevent the roach from taking it. To get rid of these little pests we throw in some loose bran; but this not having the effect (it often succeeds), we throw them a few pieces of dry bread, and these the bleak follow, and leave us in peace.

I determine to try whether, as frequently happens, there are not some big, cautious fellows lying just below our swim, nipping up the fragments of ground-bait which the smaller and more eager fry allow to escape. I have only to move the button at the back of my reel, which at once becomes free running, and am thus able to fish in the Nottingham style, and let my float travel for about 15yds. However, before the quill has gone 2yds. beyond the limit of our former swim,

it commences to go under. I strike sharply, before it has disappeared, and the keeper lands the roach of the day. weighing 1½lb.

Legering for Roach.—An old friend of ours is extremely clever at this, catching none but big fish. He uses a very fine, dressed silk line, a leger made out of 3yds. of fine gut (stained below the lead a light brown with coffee lees), a small leger lead, a No. 6 short-shanked, Round Bend hook, and three shot. The first shot—a large one—he places 3in. from the hook, the second 3ft. farther up the gut; then comes the leger lead, and the third shot 1ft. above the second. The lead, of course, slides up and down between the



ROACH LEGER, with ground bait on the line, drawn nearly the actual size. The shape the paste is pressed round the hook should be noted.

two upper shots. The shot next the hook is only placed there to keep the ground-bait in its place; in fact, the tackle is almost the same as in Fig. 21, minus the float. Both hook-bait and ground-bait are merely fine flour and a little fine bran, made up into very stiff dough. A piece nearly as big as a small marble is put on the hook, and a piece as large as a small orange round the lowest shot. The fish come about the ground-bait, and one of the largest, noticing a fine lump—a good mouthful, and no more—lying by the side of the larger piece, takes it into its mouth; and if the angler *feels* what has happened, he strikes, and master roach quits the river for ever. My friend fishes only by the side of the lasher in

weir-pools, where float tackle would be no use, and does great execution in this way during the summer months; but of course this tackle can be used in other swims.

Roach-fishing in High and Coloured Water.—One or other of the methods which I have described will always take roach in summer, if the fish are to be caught at all; and the instructions given should suffice upon all occasions from June to October, unless the water is very high or coloured (in which case I refer the reader to pp. 7-8). Immediately the water thickens, the fish go into shallower swims; and when the water of a river has been so heavily charged with mud as to be all but opaque, I have known roach taken in swims only a foot deep. When the water is merely stained, I think the best bait is a gentle or redworm; but directly it gets into a pea-soupy condition, the best bait is the tail of a well-scoured lobworm, worked, either on ordinary float tackle or on leger with or without a float, close into the bank, in from 1ft. to 3ft. of water. It is best to let the worm lie on the bottom. Drinking-places for cattle will be sometimes found to yield good roach when the water is muddy—and perch too, for the matter of that. One advantage of the leger is that no plumbing the depth is required. When the swim one has to fish is only 24in. deep, and perhaps not a yard square, the act of plumbing the depth will as likely as not drive all the fish out into the stream.

The hook commonly used for a lobworm is a No. 2 long-shanked, Round Bend; and if it is one of the Marston sliced hooks (see page 21), so much the better. My favourite hook, or rather arrangement of hooks, for the tail of a lobworm, is known as Stewart tackle (see Fig. 24). I find it hooks the roach with more certainty than any other arrangement. The hooks should be tied on with red silk, and the binding varnished. This gives a brownish red. The size of hooks used depends somewhat on the size of the worms. Some years ago I thought I had invented a great improvement on this



FIG. 24.
STEWART
TACKLE.
Size for
large
lobworm.

tackle (see Fig. 25); in theory it was much better, but in practice I found no advantage. Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell advises the use of this tackle in one of his works, and, like myself



FIG. 25. MODIFIED STEWART TACKLE.

—and, no doubt, many other anglers—invented it. The worm is threaded from the middle to the tail on the lower *hook*, and the head is caught on the top hook. In the illustration the tackle is shown made with eyed hooks—a wrinkle worth remembering, and likely to be useful to fly-fishers who want to change to the worm, and have not any suitable tackle. The lower hook is tied on with the *Turtle knot* illustrated on page 21. Fig. 26 shows the ordinary Stewart tackle baited. The points of the hooks may show quite plainly. In fact, long experience has proved that it is quite unnecessary to cover the hooks; they need only be stuck through the worm. To bait a single hook for roach, the half of a

small lobworm, or the third of a large one, should be threaded on the hook, the point being put in at the broken end, and brought up nearly to the tail. The operation is a horrid one, but is rendered less beastly if the angler holds the worm in a duster. In any case, he should have a tin of silver sand or sawdust at his side, and dip the worm and his fingers in this before baiting the hook. The worm dies quickly if threaded on a single hook; more quickly than on Stewart tackle—a disadvantage to the angler, but not to the worm. Worms may not be very sensitive, but they must object to being threaded.

Ground-baiting with Worms for Roach.—Success with the lobworm, or, rather, with the roach, depends in a very great measure on the skilful distribution of whole or broken



FIG. 26. STEWART TACKLE BAITED.

up* worms along the swim. Our bread-and-bran mixture is of little or no use when we fish with the tail of a lob. The one ground-bait now is worms, which have to be thrown in loose and with much judgment, for it is no easy matter to place them so that they sink to the bottom close to the hook-bait. When ground-baiting with worms, we have to keep in mind the depth of the water and the speed of the stream. The swifter and deeper the stream, the higher above the swim must the worms be thrown. No two eddies are exactly alike, but the sketch of a small one which is given in Fig. 27 will, I hope, convey some idea of the best way to throw in the ground-bait in such spots. To fish with float tackle, the angler should stand at C, drop

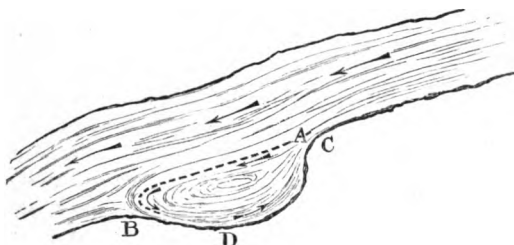


FIG. 27. AN EDDY.

his tackle a little above A, and let his float work along the dotted line to B, and round by the bank D to A again. The worms he had best cast in at B; they will then be swept round by the current to A, which is the most likely place to find the fish. These remarks apply to small eddies, where the distance from A to B is only a few yards. In very large eddies, formed by sharp bends in the river, and where the distance from A to B is great, say from 20yds. upwards, the angler can only fish a short distance along the dotted line A B; and even if they could be thrown so far, it will be no use to put in the worms at B. The best plan then is to put the worms close to the bank, opposite the point C, and if that does not appear

* Nottingham anglers put half a dozen worms in a cocoanut shell, and then snip them into small pieces with a pair of scissors.

to answer, throw them a few yards towards the middle of the eddy.

The foregoing remarks apply chiefly to those eddies which run shallow close to the bank. Now and again we come across an eddy the bank by which is almost perpendicular, and the water under it fairly deep. In such an eddy, the fish will be found more often lying close to the bank than along the dotted line.

As I have already stated—and I can hardly state it too often—the position of the fish depends in a very great measure on the colour of the water. One day we may visit the river and find the fish on the outside of the eddy, where the water is 5ft. deep. During the night it rains; the following day the water is much more coloured, and we find no fish where we caught them the previous day, but take several about 4yds. nearer the bank, where the water is only 2ft. deep. To be very successful in fishing eddies requires a good deal of experience; but fish feed so well when the water is clearing after a freshet (*i.e.*, a push of fresh water or flood), that the veriest tyro ought not at such times to go home with his basket empty, and that same basket will probably contain something more than roach—to wit, perch, eels, chub, tench, &c.

The leger for use in eddies should be the same as that already described (see page 27), as light a lead being used as will hold the bottom. The angler should keep his rod very still, and if using the treble hook arrangement—*i.e.*, Stewart tackle (see page 54)—he should strike at the slightest touch from a fish. If a single hook is used, a couple of slight pulls, or one considerable one, should be felt before striking. That is as near as I can put it on paper; a good deal of experience is necessary before the angler can acquire the art of striking just at the right moment. It is as well to hold the rod in the right hand, and bring the line over the first finger and under the other fingers. The slightest bite will then be felt on the back of the first finger, provided the line is a fine one, and the rod-rings I have recommended are used. When I feel a slight touch—the worm being on a single hook—I generally lower the point of the rod a little, so that the fish shall not feel any

further resistance. I then watch the line, and as soon as it tightens I strike.

It is very essential in fishing with worms that these useful baits should be free from dirt, or scoured, as that condition is usually termed. A few lines may therefore be usefully devoted to

Catching, Scouring, and Keeping Lobworms.—Everyone possessing or having the run of a garden can easily get some thousand of lob worms any mild evening after a shower. As soon as it gets dark the worms come partly out of their holes, and may be seen by the light of a lantern. One person should hold the lantern, and the other a small bucket, and the two should go on tiptoe (if wearing tennis shoes, so much the better) along gravel paths and over close-cut lawns, picking up all the worms they can see. Lob worms are not to be caught napping except during or just after rain. The drier it is, the less they show themselves, and the more difficult they are to catch. The worm-hunter should not grab at the worm's head (or tail—I forget which it is that lies out), but place the point of a finger on the worm-hole. The worm is then fixed; it can neither go forward or backward, and on being taken hold of can be drawn out, if pulled slowly and gently. On windy nights the worms will be found lying out in sheltered situations only, and during frosts keep within doors.

In the daytime a few lob worms may be got by digging, or by watering the sides of gravel paths with a mixture of mustard and water. There are various other mixtures which answer the same purpose, but I need not mention them. It is not a bad plan to push a spade into the soil as far as it will go, and then move it backwards and forwards. This causes a miniature earthquake, and the worms leave their houses.

To scour lob worms, a good-sized earthenware pot should be two-thirds filled with damp moss—sphagnum is the best—and the worms put on the top of the moss. They quickly work through to the bottom. The moss should be kept damp, and changed every two or three days, and dead worms removed. In changing the moss it is not necessary to pick out all the worms. The plan is to turn out the old moss and worms on

the ground, half fill the pot with fresh moss, and put the old moss and worms on the top. The live worms then work down into the fresh moss, and the old moss, containing the dead worms, can be easily removed. The pot should be kept in a cool place. A little milk poured over the moss is supposed to hasten the scouring process. In three days the worms are generally ready for use. Need I say that the cleanest and most lively ones, especially those without knots in them, should be placed on the hook, and the coarser ones thrown in for ground-bait? Some prefer damp cotton waste to moss.

Persons who do a good deal of fishing, more particularly in the winter, will find it well worth their while to start a "wormery." Collect a number of worms when the weather is favourable, and place them in a large chest or box nearly filled with garden soil. A few leaves, straw, hay, or any garden litter, placed on the top of the soil, will afford food for the worms, and the soil must not be allowed to get dry.*

I have gone so deeply into the various methods of roach-fishing that very little remains to be added on

Winter Roach-fishing in Rivers.—Everything that I have said relating to fishing with lobworms when the rivers are high and coloured, applies with as much force to winter as to summer fishing. The great winter bait is the tail of a lobworm; but if the season should happen to be dry, and the water low and bright, gentles or redworms will sometimes kill better. As a general rule, light leger float tackle (see Fig. 21) will be found most killing for roach-fishing in winter with the lobworm, and ordinary float tackle (see Fig. 13) when gentles or small worms are the bait.

Eddies are very easily fished in winter, being then free from weeds, whereas in summer these weeds are very much *en evidence*, and a great nuisance. What is an eddy when the river is high,

*Lobs are sometimes called dew-worms. The largest usually have a thick ring of colour round them, near the head. The smaller ones, without this ring, are termed maiden-lob, and are the best hook-baits. Two other common and useful worms are brandlings, or gilt-tails, and redworms, called on the Trent cockspurs. They are smaller than lob, and are found in rotten dung and decayed vegetable refuse, if old and not very moist. The brandling is the larger of the two, and may be known by its being partly covered with small rings, and being less red than the redworm. The so-called meal worm is the larva of a beetle found in mills, and is a first-rate bait for most kinds of fish in mill-tails.

is usually almost dead water when it is low, and consequently a place where weeds grow luxuriantly. After the first few frosts of winter the weeds begin to rot, and the roach soon work out of them. Their movements now depend as much on the height and colour of the water as in summer, but are also influenced by the temperature, which, if low, drives them into deeper water. They also like quieter swims than in summer, and always prefer a sandy bottom to any other; but I have, however, often done well on mud in winter. Late evening and early morning are not good times of the day for roach-fishing in cold weather. During the day there is usually a genial period of from one and a half to two hours in length; the sun may come out, or try at it, and the chilly feeling goes off for a while. Sometimes the geniality comes about eleven or twelve o'clock, sometimes not until three; but whenever it comes, then the fish are almost sure to bite. Winter fishing requires a good deal of enthusiasm on the part of the angler to be enjoyable, but if persevered with, it usually repays the trouble devoted to it, for the fish caught are always in excellent condition, afford good sport, and run larger than those taken during the summer. The remarks in Chapter I. as to the position of fish in winter should be read in connection with this part of my subject.

Roach-fishing in Lakes, Broads, Meres, Ponds, and Canals.—Roach-fishing in still water is a much simpler matter than in rivers. As a rule, the fish are not particularly shy, and fine float tackle—a modification of that shown on page 25—will suffice to catch them. The float should be very small—a porcupine quill is as good as anything—and there should be at most one or two small shots, about 1ft. to 1ft. 6in. from the hook. If gut is used, it cannot be too fine. Best of all is self-cocking float tackle (see page 49), as no shot are then placed on the line, and the bait sinks at about the same rate to the bottom as if no hook and line were attached to it. The objection to this arrangement is the difficulty of getting the gut quite straight (in the other case, the weight of shot straightens it), and if gut hangs in curls no fish are likely to be caught. After a good long soaking it is not difficult to nearly take out the curls; but the best plan is to soak the tackle for an hour the

previous day, then put the rod together, join the tackle to the running line, catch the hook near the butt, and by winding up the reel strain the line tight. If the angler is living near the water, he will then have his tackle all ready for use on the morrow; and even if he lives at a distance, he will find that the coiling of the gut for an hour or so in the morning, during the journey, will hardly affect its straightness, and that upon being wetted it will come straight in a few minutes. When no shot are on the line, horsehair is perhaps preferable to gut, as it straightens more easily. Self-cocking float tackle should be tried in still water when the roach are not to be taken by other methods.

If the angler is fishing with float tackle, he will want a long, light rod, unless the fish lie close to the shore; but he can, if he prefer it, use a short rod, and cast out the tackle in the Nottingham style (see page 45). The running line and the rest of the tackle should be the same as that already described. Legering for roach (see page 52) is sometimes done in lakes, but unless the fish lie a long distance from the shore, I think float tackle is usually to be preferred. If a leger is used, the lead should be as small as the angler can conveniently cast out, and the line a dressed one, if long casts have to be made. For short casts, an undressed line can be used if worked after the fashion shown on page 45, in Fig. 20. Of course, long casts can be made off the reel; but this involves a heavier lead than is desirable, unless the method of squeezing a small lump of stiff ground-bait on to the line near the hook, is adopted. This gives the necessary weight for casting either light leger or float tackle.

The best all-round bait for pond roach is paste—white, red, or yellow*—but in some waters other baits will be found better. Wasp grubs are very killing at times, particularly if a few are mixed up with the ground-bait, and the principle, which I regard as being so important, of having the ground-bait of the same character as the hook-bait, but coarser, is thus carried out. Redworms and brandlings sometimes bring a few large roach to basket, and gentles are usually taking, especially in winter. For a general ground-bait there is

* Coloured with the ordinary paint of commerce, in powder.

nothing better than the one recommended on page 35. It should not be made into balls, but should be thrown in loose, and only a small portion should be thrown in at one time. If nicely-scoured gentles are used on the hook, a few unscoured ones should be thrown in round the float every quarter of an hour, or oftener. When paste fishing, a few pellets of paste should be cast in as ground-bait, and the same principle carried out whatever the bait on the hook.

All the precautions as to keeping quiet, and out of sight of the fish, of taking the tackle in and out of the water slowly and gently, of choosing a pitch facing the sun, of not over ground-baiting, of baiting the hook with clean hands, of landing the fish as quietly as possible—all these should be borne in mind as much in pond or lake as in river-fishing. Plumbing the depth should be done very carefully; and if the float when in use projects a quarter of an inch out of the water, the depth will be right when the plummet is on the bottom and top of the float is just level with the surface of the water.

“But where am I to fish in these still waters?” the beginner may very likely ask. The reply is that the fish will be found near the spots most abounding in their food, and also near where they can take shelter—on the edge of weeds, close to camp-shedding, under deep hollow banks, under trees which overhang the water, and particularly in those places where anglers are in the habit of fishing, and where, consequently, much ground-bait is thrown in. The depth is not nearly so important as in river-fishing, but in cold weather the fish will be found in deeper water than in summer. A gravel or sandy bottom should always be preferred to a muddy one, but few indeed are the ponds through which no stream flows in which the bottom is clean. In very large lakes which run deep towards the centre, the roach will be found near the shore, among or on the edge of the reed-beds, if there are any; but it must be borne in mind that the larger the piece of water, the more difficult it is to find the fish, and the angler will do well to choose a suitable spot, and throw in fish-food every morning for several days.

This brings me to the portion of the subject which I have kept until last, namely,

Baiting-up Roach Pitches.—I can hardly advise the beginner to bait up roach swims, for after he had got the fish together, and on the feed, at a considerable expenditure of trouble, and perhaps money, he would probably either scare them all away or make them so suspicious by his clumsy fishing that all his trouble would be wasted. His better plan is to stop not too long at one pitch, shifting as soon as he has succeeded in scaring the fish—a condition of affairs which is easily and quickly brought about. The old hand, on the contrary, baits up one or two swims for several days in advance, then fishes them quietly and carefully, and catches many and large fish.

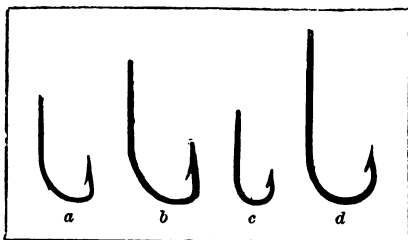
As a general rule, roach afford very good sport in rivers without any ground-bait more than that which is thrown in at the time of fishing. Sometimes, during the hot months, when the roach get very shy, I bait up a swim with a bait new to the place, with success. For instance, once at Henley, when no roach were being caught, I baited up a deep swim with creed wheat for four days, then fished with wheat—a bait which, as a general rule, is not much used in the Thames—and had good sport. Every evening for a week I went to the same swim, and never left it without a nice basket of fish. The quantity of bait thrown in would be about two pints of wheat each evening. Had I been going to fish in the morning, I should have baited in the morning, and so made the fish expectant of food about the time I was prepared to present them with some inclosing a hook. Carrion gentles are excellent for baiting up places for roach, in either rivers or still waters. In ponds, they are, of course, thrown in loose; but in rivers, if the stream is strong enough to wash them away, they should be mixed up with clay. It is not a bad plan to place a number in a paper bag with a stone and sink them. The bag does not burst until it has been on the bottom some time. Another excellent plan in rivers is to tie a large stone to half a loaf, and sink it in a swim one or two days before you fish, the hook-bait, of course,

being paste. This should not be done in ponds, as the bread quickly goes sour in the stagnant water, and drives away rather than attracts the fish. In very wet summers, when the water is more often coloured than not, it is a capital plan to keep one or two swims regularly baited with worms—not many are required, but about a hundred should be thrown in every day. Swims so baited generally yield well, and more than roach will be brought to creel.

I have, I think, mentioned all the ground-baits that the angler need know of, but there is an unlimited number of mixtures which are more or less useful. For instance, there are brewers' grains, barley, or any other kind of meal, boiled potatoes (mashed), coagulated blood, pollard, greaves (called *scratching*s on the Trent), boiled rice, &c.

Finally, a word of advice kept to the end to make it the more impressive. The size of a fish's stomach is limited. If that stomach is distended with your ground-bait, the fish is not likely to further distend it by taking the bait on your hook. Therefore, when baiting up a swim in advance, give the fish (for this applies to all fish) a fair and reasonable time—not less than twenty hours after the final baiting—to get fresh appetites after the feast you have provided for them, so that, when you come with rod and line, they will, like poor little Oliver, be asking for more. The small quantity of bait thrown in when fishing is quite another matter.

There is an artistic method of taking roach, rudd, and dace, akin to fly-fishing, which I should have mentioned sooner. The tackle consists of a light but stiff fly-rod, a three-yard length of fine gut, and a single crystal hook. On the hook-shank is nipped a No. 1 split shot. The hook is baited with caddis, gentle, or other bait, and cast where the fish can be seen or are supposed to be. A few gentles cast in previously will lull the suspicions of the fish, and set them feeding. The fish often take the bait as it sinks to the bottom. On seeing this occur or the line tighten, the angler should strike. This is a capital method for small streams with pool and shallow alternating.




PERCH HOOKS (actual size).—*a*, for minnows; *b*, for gudgeon; *c*, for red worms; *d*, for lobworms.

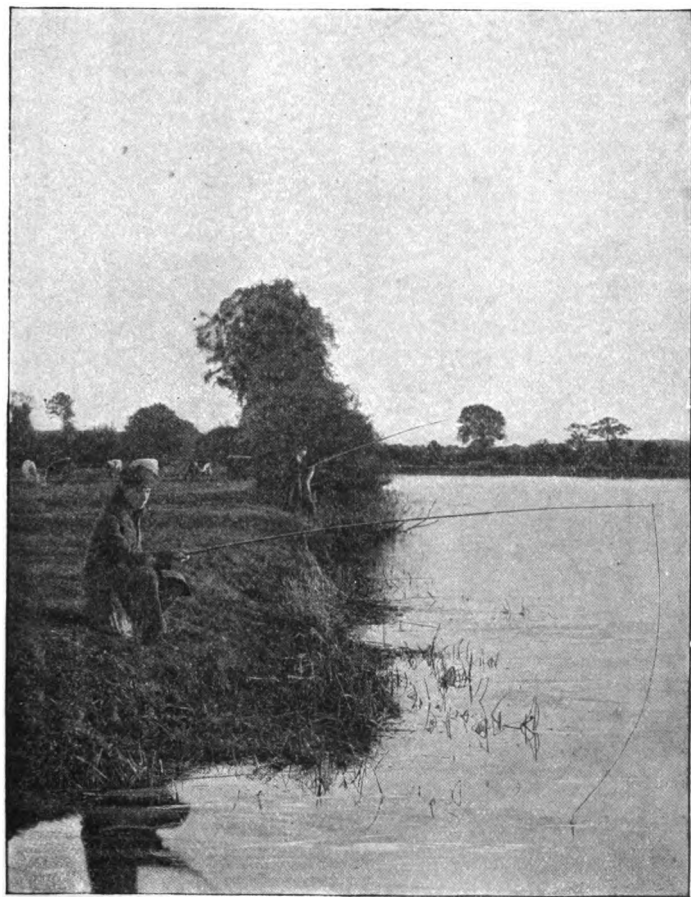
CHAPTER IV.

THE PERCH (*Perca fluviatilis*).

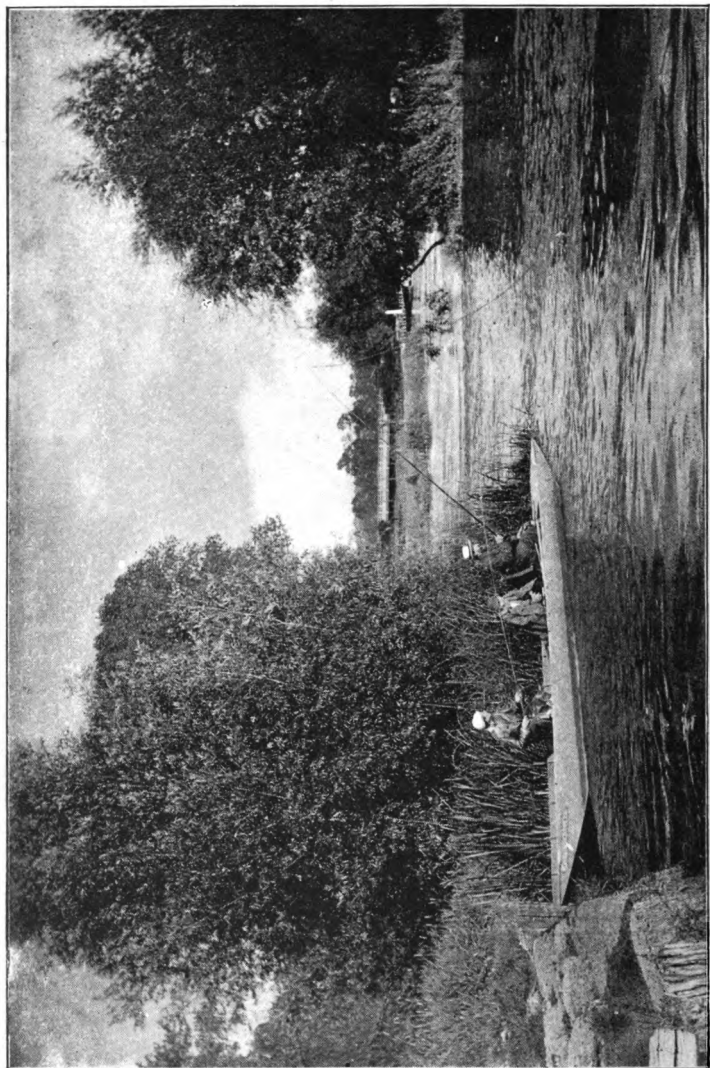
*Habits—Baits—Minnow-catching—Paternostering—Float-fishing
Legering—Lake and Pond Fishing.*

 HOG-BACKED fish is the perch, with dark olive back and golden-brown sides, shading to a light drab on the belly. From its back, two-thirds of the way down its sides, are six dark bars of colour. Its fins are tipped with red, and its scales, though small, are very rough and hard; taken altogether, it is as handsome a fish as swims. Not only is it handsome, but a fine sporting fish, by no means easy of capture in well-fished waters, and most excellent eating, especially if it has dwelt for a time in brackish water, as some occasionally do. There are authentic records of perch weighing 5lb., and even more, caught in the United Kingdom. On the Continent they run larger; but in England anything over 1lb. weight is looked upon as a good fish, and, except in a few highly favoured waters, a two-and-a-half-pounder is not often caught. They are rarely found north of the Forth.

River perch do not differ very materially in their habits from roach. About June, after spawning, they are found in rather shallow water where the stream runs fairly fast. All through the summer they remain for the most part among the weeds, but not out of the stream. When the weeds begin to rot, they are found scattered about all over the river when the bottom is gravel or sand, and abound more particularly under deep clay



FLOAT-FISHING FOR PERCH.



From Photo by

PERCH FISHING BELOW PANGBOUENE WEIR.

[S. Victor White, Reading.]

banks where there is a gentle stream, by the side of withies the roots of which grow out into the water, and along old camp-shedding, *i.e.*, where the banks have been shored up with slabs of timber. Quiet corners in weir and mill pools are also favourite spots. They are not often found in summer where the bottom is muddy, or where there is no stream, unless the river be in flood. About October, after a few sharp, frosty nights, perch begin to form shoals and get into deep water, and where one is caught, there should the angler patiently wait for a few minutes, in the hope of catching others. When the water becomes coloured, perch go into shallower swims, and all that I have written on pages 7 and 53 applies to them. When the water rises, perch retreat into the eddies, and *it is when the river is all but over its banks, and clearing after a flood, and the nights are frosty, and the days open, that the very best perch-fishing is had.* Then it is that the angler passes down the river from one eddy to another, pulling out fish almost as quickly as he can drop in his paternoster. When the water is low and bright, the sport with the fish, both in summer and winter, is *very* uncertain.

Men who know only a little about fishing are apt to have the ideas that perch are always in holes, always in shoals, and, until experience teaches otherwise, that they always feed voraciously.

It will be noticed from the foregoing remarks, which apply more particularly to good-sized rivers, that these views are incorrect. In very small streams, however, the deeper portions—often called the holes—will nearly always contain the best fish. A hole in a small stream would be a shallow in a large river.

It is not so much the time of year as the temperature, height, and colour of water, which influences the position of fish. If I were asked what swims to fish for perch in December, I could not give an answer; but if I were asked where to fish when the thermometer is at 30deg., and the water at summer level and quite clear, I might be able to form an accurate opinion on the subject. On this point, the introductory chapter should be consulted.

Perch Baits.—These are either live baits—minnows, small gudgeon, or the fry of coarse fish—or worms or fresh-water shrimps. There is no other bait worth trying, except, perhaps,

a small artificial spinning bait, which should revolve very quickly, and be kept very bright. Of worms, the best are thoroughly well scoured lobworms in winter, or at any time when the water is coloured, and redworms or brandlings in summer. I have often found brandlings take better in ponds than in rivers; they are found in old dung-heaps, and may be known by a number of small rings round their body. They smell offensively, and give off a yellow juice when handled, which sometimes irritates the fingers. In summer and autumn a small gudgeon is by far the best bait for large perch in rivers; but sometimes when the water is very low in summer, a small redworm presented on very fine tackle is better (see Chap. VIII.).

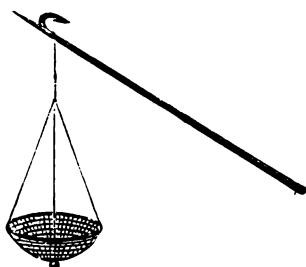


FIG. 28. MINNOW-NET ON
BOAT-HOOK.

Minnows are very favourite baits in rivers where they abound. The usual method of catching them is to dip a round or square, small-meshed net (see Fig. 28), attached by cords to a scull, boat-hook, or pole, into about 3ft. or 4ft. of water. A hole among the weeds, and the shallows below weirs, are

likely places in summer. The pole must be held very steady, and the bait-catcher *must* stand quite still. As soon as a few minnows are noticed over the net, the pole should be raised sharply, and the little fish transferred to a bait-can* or pail. In winter, the minnows are found mostly in ditches and small streams which drain into the river. They do not then come

* The best bait-cans have perforated zinc interiors, which enable the minnows to be lifted out without wetting the hands. When the can is carried, the water is aerated by washing against and through the perforations. I have recently had a bait-can made large and strong enough to sit on; it is at times a great convenience. If the can has no zinc interior, a small aquarium net is very useful to dip out the minnows. In winter, the water in the can should not be changed more than is absolutely necessary, as changes of water temperature are harmful to the fish. A few minnows can be carried for some time in a soda-water bottle, two-thirds full of water, and tightly corked up. Motion is essential, as it is the shaking of the bottle which aerates the water. A patent has been taken out in America for carrying fish in large quantities according to this principle. An admirable patent aerating bait-can has been designed by Mr. Basil Field, and is sold in most of the tackle shops.

well over the net, and often have to be driven into it by beating the water and poking the sedge at the sides of the ditch with a stick. When the weather is very mild and the water low, they work out into the river. In the "Practical Fisherman," Mr. Keene gives the following method of catching minnows in small streams:

"Procure a large, wide-mouthed, transparent pickle-bottle, and have the bottom cut out. Tie over the open bottom a piece of thin canvas or calico. Place some small worms or bread in the bottle, and drop the whole apparatus in the stream where there are plenty of minnows, with its mouth looking down stream, having a cord, of course, attached to its mouth." The stream, percolating through the calico, causes eddying currents which agitate the food and attract the minnows, which enter the bottle. I have not tried this plan. Glass minnow-traps are sold at

some of the tackle-shops.*

In the Lower Thames, minnows are so scarce that a fine-meshed cast-net has to

be used to take them. Some anglers believe that light-coloured minnows are more relished by the perch than dark ones. Minnows are easily lightened in colour by leaving them for half an hour in a white earthenware basin exposed to the light.

Fresh-water shrimps abound in most brooks and ditches, especially those which grow water-cresses. They are a first-rate bait, and should always be tried when obtainable.

Paternostering is the most popular method of taking perch, and it has many advantages. The construction of the paternoster is very

clearly shown by the illustration (Fig. 29). For summer use, the main length of gut should be as fine as it can be obtained

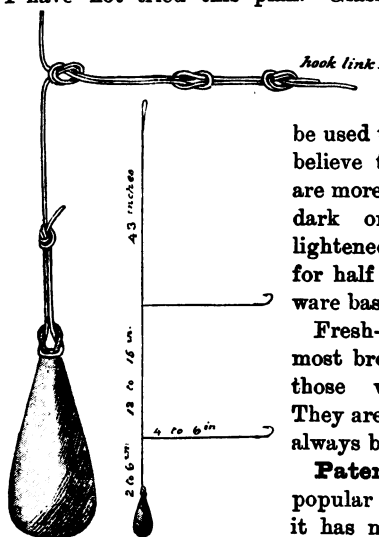


FIG 29.—PERCH PATERNOSTER.

* I have seen these used with great success in some waters.

without being fine drawn, and the hook links should be a trifle finer, and must therefore be fine drawn. I never use more than two hooks myself, but many anglers use three. If the water is very clear, the day sunny, and the fish shy, it is better to use only one. The position of the hooks on the main length of gut should depend on the size of the river and colour of the water. In a small stream where the perch holes run about 5ft. in depth, one hook should be close to the lead, and the other about 14in. or 15in. above it; but in a large river like the Thames, the lowest hook should, for use in clear, deep water, be placed 6in. above the lead, and the second hook 18in. higher. When the water is more coloured than usual, the gut link of the lowest hook should always be looped on to the loop by which the lead is attached; for in coloured water fish feed close to the bottom, and where the fish are there should the hook-bait be.

The size and bend of hooks should depend on the bait used and the sized fish expected. For a minnow in summer, I like a No. 8 Kendal, Sneck, or Crystal hook; for a gudgeon, the same, three sizes larger. For a redworm, a No. 9 Round Bend; for a lobworm, a No. 3 Round Bend; and for shrimps, large roach-hooks. Where the perch run very large, as in the Kennet, hooks a size or two larger should be used.

With regard to the length of the hook-link, that should vary according to circumstances. When fishing among the weeds in summer, it should be short—4in. In winter, when the river is clear of weeds, it may be 2in. longer. For paternostering there is no better rod than the light one described on page 13, without the extra butt. For summer fishing, and for use at any time in small streams, I prefer a Nottingham undressed silk line, which passes so smoothly through the rings that, by keeping the line over the first finger of the hand holding the rod, bites can be felt before even the rod point is shaken. For winter fishing, when the paternoster has sometimes to be cast out a long distance, I use a very fine, dressed, plaited line; but a Nottingham line can even then be used if the angler can cast off the reel. I will explain the two methods of casting later on.

To work the paternoster in summer, the angler is either taken

very slowly over the weeds in a boat or punt, and drops his paternoster, baited with minnow, worms, gudgeon, or fresh-water shrimp, in holes among the weeds, or else he fishes, as well as he is able, from the bank. In large rivers, a boat is very necessary in summer fishing, when the perch lie as far out in the stream as they can get without being out of the weeds. Still water and a muddy bottom are things to be avoided in summer perch-fishing. Please understand that all the perch do not lie in the weeds, but most of them do. Very often good sport is obtained, especially in early morning or late evening, when the fish are roaming about after food, by fishing right out in the centre of the stream; but this is best done with float tackle.

When the paternoster lead, after being swung (not cast) out, is exactly over the spot you wish to fish, the point of the rod should be lowered, and a little spare line, which you hold ready in your left hand, is let go; then, before the perch can see how it happens, a fine minnow is wriggling about in front of his nose. Now hold the rod steady, and keep the line taut. In a moment you may feel a slight touch on the back of the first finger of your right hand. *Lower the point of the rod at once*, so that the perch, which has seized the minnow, may not feel a taut line. A second more, and two jerks come at the line, then strike—not too hard—and play the fish gently, for a hook easily tears out of a perch's mouth. Then go on to another opening in the weeds, and never stop long in one place. To this rule there are a few exceptions. In some waters the perch are very shy, and are only to be caught by a great expenditure of patience.

In winter, you fish either in or just outside eddies, according to the height of the water. In very mild weather, the fish will even work right out into the stream. If the eddy is a very large one, do not row all over it, but moor at the top of it, and fish every bit of it by casting out the paternoster. To do this with Nottingham line and reel, place the little finger of the right hand on the rim of the reel, swing out the paternoster in the direction you wish it to go, releasing the reel as the lead flies out, as it should do any distance up to 40yds., or even more. When the lead has gone nearly far enough through the air, it is checked by the finger being gradu-

ally applied to the reel. This cast *must* be carefully practised before the angler goes a-fishing, unless he wishes to spoil his own sport, and that of any friend he may have with him. An easier method is to pull a few yards of line (which must be dressed) off the reel, on to the floor of the punt, and swing out the lead, the right hand holding the rod, and the line running through the left hand. This also requires practice, but is not difficult. Great accuracy in casting should be aimed at, and more accurate casts are made with the Thames than with the Trent method (see also pages 44-46). I prefer the former.

When a cast has been made, the paternoster should be left a few minutes, then drawn gently in a few yards, then left again, and so on, until it is brought close to the punt. On some days the fish feed eagerly, on others they have to be waited for, and bite cautiously. Paternostering is a very pretty and pleasing branch of bottom fishing, and I recommend it to the careful attention of beginners. The secrets of success are to cast with accuracy, to hold the rod steady, to lower the point directly a bite is felt, and of course to fish as fine as possible. If a small gudgeon is the bait, the perch should be given much longer time than with a minnow. Some anglers put a worm on one hook, and live-bait on the other, or even go in for a gudgeon on a hook mounted on gimp (with the view of its taking a jack), a minnow, and a worm—a nice choice for the fish, but such an unusual arrangement to see suspended in the water that I think it must make them suspicious. The one thing is apt to spoil the other, except in little-fished waters.

Angling with Float-tackle for Perch.—This is very simple. The line and gut should be fine, the float a good-sized quill if the bait is a gudgeon, a smaller one for a minnow, the hook of size and kind according to the bait used (see remarks on page 68), and the shot placed not less than 1ft. above the hook. Nottingham running-tackle is by far the best for this style of fishing, as it is a great advantage for the angler to be able to be some distance from the float. The depth should, when possible, be plumbed, and the float placed so that the bait is about 6in. or 8in. from the bottom—less in coloured water.

In thick water, when the tail of a lobworm is used, the best

plan is to bait up (see pages 10 and 62) two or three likely spots, and fish as for roach, with the leger float-tackle described on page 47. A few broken worms should be thrown in every now and again, to keep the fish on the feed. A single No. 4 Round Bend hook or Stewart tackle may be used for the bait. Large takes of fine perch are often made this way.

In both summer and winter, the angler, if using Nottingham running-tackle, can cast his hook, baited with gudgeon or minnow, into all kinds of likely places, or can let it float down stream 20yds. in front of him while he follows in a boat. When the float goes down, the angler should allow the fish about a quarter of a minute before striking if the bait is a minnow or worm—more if the bait is a gudgeon, less if a shrimp. Some writers have advised cork floats for perch-fishing, but as floats are, at the best, necessary evils, which only frighten the fish, I imagine that the smaller they are, the less they show, and the more quietly they go under water, the better. and therefore I prefer the quill floats. Of course, the float must be just so large that the gudgeon or minnow, as the case may be, cannot pull it under.

Legering for Perch is a first-rate method when the fish are shy. Lobworms are the usual bait, but are not much use unless the water is coloured, or the swim has been baited up with worms.* A small gudgeon on a leger (see page 27) will kill perch when the fish will look at nothing else; but the bottom has to be very clear to allow the use of live-bait on leger tackle. The leger is cast out like a paternoster, but not moved so often, and is suited for fishing places where the perch run large and shy, and have to be waited for. The gut lying on the bottom is not so noticeable as in the paternoster.

Lake and Pond Perch-fishing.—This differs from river-fishing in the slight difficulty—except in large lakes—of finding the fish. In large lakes, trailing a small, bright, spinning

* Perch may sometimes be attracted to a spot by sinking some meat-bones, to which there are still a few fragments of meat adhering. A glass bottle, containing minnows, sunk to the bottom, has also been recommended, but I could never meet with anyone who had found it useful.

bait* will often determine the most fishy spots, but it is usually desirable to bait up a spot with worms (see pages 9, 10, and 63) for several days in advance. The baits for still water are the same as those used in rivers, but the worm will often take better than minnows in ponds. To find the fish, note the places where the water is deepest, the bank hollowest, where old piles exist, by the sides of weed-beds—in fact wherever there is shelter and food for the fish. Float tackle, paternoster, or leger—all are good. In very deep water, if a float is preferred, it must be a slider (see page 26); but the paternoster is the most convenient form of tackle. In ponds, perch are usually easier to catch than in running water. In Lough Derg, one of the largest lakes in Ireland, I had some curious experiences with perch, which it may be useful to mention. They seemed to feed only from about June to September. The best bait obtainable was perch-fry, about the size of minnows, and the size of the perch depended altogether on the depth at which I fished. In about 10ft. of water, all I caught would run about 8in. long; in 20ft. they would all be within an ounce or two of $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Fish of a size usually swam in shoals together, and the various shoals would swim at different depths. I rarely caught a perch there over 1lb., so I suppose I did not fish deep enough. In some lakes perch take an artificial fly if it is allowed to sink, and is drawn slowly through the water. Alexandras and red palmers are good flies for the purpose (see Chapter VII.). On rare occasions I have caught perch on flies in the Thames.

In ponds and lakes (but not in rivers) perch are in shoals most of the year, so wherever one is caught the angler should remain. Always give perch plenty of time to take the bait into its mouth before striking, as to prick and miss a perch usually causes the rest of the shoal to go away, or at any rate to leave off feeding—a fact well known to our forefathers, and

* If artificial spinning baits are bought expressly for perch, I should recommend small gold or silver Devons, very small gold and silver Clippers, or Farlow's "Watchet" minnow—in short, any very quick-spinning, brilliant bait. If a natural minnow is used, it cannot be mounted on better tackle than a very small Chapman Spinner, which I need not describe, as it is obtainable in every tackle-shop. Above the spinning bait should be a trace—i.e., a 2-yd. length of gut, in the centre of which a small lead is slung below the level of the line, below the lead being two small brass swivels. These are sold ready made.

mentioned in every book on bottom fishing for several centuries past. I met an angler last season who informed me that, when he found the perch taking shyly, he always fished with a small triangle, one hook of which he put through the minnow's lip. With this arrangement, which is only suitable for float-tackle, he had to strike immediately on perceiving a bite. I have not had an opportunity of trying this plan.

I have only to mention a very artistic method of perch-fishing, and this chapter is finished. Take a 3-yd. length of fine gut, loop on a roach-hook at the end, and place a shot 10in. above the hook; bait with a fresh-water shrimp, and cast it into likely spots. Let the bait sink until almost on the bottom, then draw up slowly, and strike on seeing the line tighten. Other fish besides perch are caught in this way.

Perch Preservation and Cultivation.—Much attention has been paid to this subject of late years. The spawn may be collected and placed in safe spots until hatched. It should not be moved until the eyes—two black specks—of the young fish can be seen, and should not be handled roughly. The eggs are about the size of No. 1 shot, and lie in long wavy bands of gelatinous matter. The eggs will hatch in still water, near the surface, and appear to require the warmth or light of the sun. Swans, ducks, in fact all wildfowl, should be kept from the water during the spawning season—usually April and May. A few ducks will destroy a million potential perch in a day. Or the spawn may be protected by placing wire netting round it. This is a plan largely followed on the Thames. Spawning perch may be netted, and will spawn wherever placed. Advantage may be taken of this to stock ponds and rivers. Hurdles interlaced with willow boughs, if placed in quiet corners of the river, will often be utilised by spawning perch. When the eggs are eyed they and the hurdles can be shifted in company if perch fry are required elsewhere.



BARBEL HOOKS (actual size).—a, for large lobes, threaded on hook; b, for smaller lobes, threaded, or gentles in clay ball; c, for lob hooked in middle or head only

CHAPTER V.

THE BARBEL (*Barbus Vulgaris*).

Habits and Haunts—Baits—Legering—Ground-baiting—Fishing with Float Tackle in the Nottingham Style—Tight-corking—Clay-ball Fishing.

BARBEL, when you can catch them, give better sport than any other of the coarse fish. They are found in a good many rivers in England, but not in Ireland or Scotland; and are most plentiful in the Thames and the Trent. In the last-named river they have been known to reach a weight of 18lb. A barbel of 12lb., or a little over, is, however, the largest any reader of this book is likely to capture. In shape the fish is very much like an enlarged gudgeon. His mouth is decorated with four barbules, or beards, and the upper part of his head and back is a greenish brown, shading to a yellowish green on the sides; while over all is just a suspicion of bronze. The belly fins are tinged with a pinkish red.

The barbel spawns* in the spring, on shallows, where it spends a week to recruit, and then takes lodgings for the season in or near what anglers term barbel swims. These swims are, broadly speaking, of three kinds: First, weir and mill-pools; second, deep water alongside steep clay or overhanging banks; third, deep holes in mid-stream, where the current is strong, and, generally, where the current is heavy and the

* The eggs, or roe, are sometimes very poisonous.

depth considerable. In the weir-pools, barbel are best fished for with the leger; but wherever the bottom runs fairly even, and the current is not too strong, float tackle has the advantage. The best hook-bait at the very commencement of the season is two caddis; but later on there is nothing so good as a well-scoured lobworm (see page 57). Gentles and greaves are also good, and occasionally cheese is killing. In autumn, a small lampern is said to be a deadly bait for large barbel, but of it I cannot speak from experience. In early spring, just after spawning, barbel will frequently run at a spinning bait, and sometimes a live-bait, and often cause grievous disappointment to the patient fishers for Thames trout. The best months for barbel-fishing are July, August, and September.

Barbel are both shy and capricious, going off the feed for days together. Like salmon, there are some pools in which they never will take a bait, though known to be present in large numbers. The tackle for barbel should be fine but strong, and should *always* be tested most carefully before being used. Very few fish will be caught unless the angler goes to considerable trouble and expense in the way of baiting-up swims for one or more days in advance; and as a general rule, the fishing for the day is over at 10 a.m., or sooner. One can hardly fish too early or too late for barbel. When the water gets coloured, barbel shift out of their holes into the shallower streams to search for food, and the first day of a rise in the water is the golden opportunity of the barbel-fisher. Baits for these fish cannot be too clean and sweet.

Legering for Barbel.—This is the usual Thames method, and is best suited for weir-pools and uneven bottoms generally. The leger is the same as that described on page 27; but the gut should be a trifle stouter, and the lead—which it is well to paint the colour of gravel—will have to be heavier to keep the bottom in the heavy water. The best hook for the usual bait—a lobworm—is sliced No. 1 (see pages 19 and 21). In Fig. 30 is shown a typical weirpool, with the set of the currents and the position of the punt. The dotted line represents the fishing-line. The punt should be about 30yds. (more if the water is at all bright and shallow) off

the fish. If the river is clear, the angler should cast to A, where the water is probably deep. If the water is coloured, he should cast to B, where the pool usually shallows a little. Of course, all pools are not alike, but there is, in most cases, a family likeness. The punt might be the other side of the lasher (L), in the eddy (E), moored near the bank; or the barbel might lie just where I have placed the punt, in which case the punt should be moored at F. Local fishermen know from experience about where the fish are, and will sometimes give information on the subject, if it is clearly to their interest to do so; but the angler should

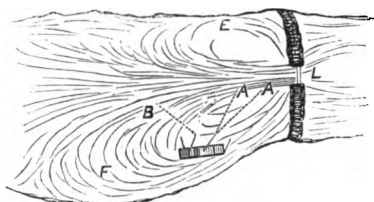


FIG. 30. POSITION OF PUNT IN WEIR-POOLS, FOR BARBEL-FISHING.

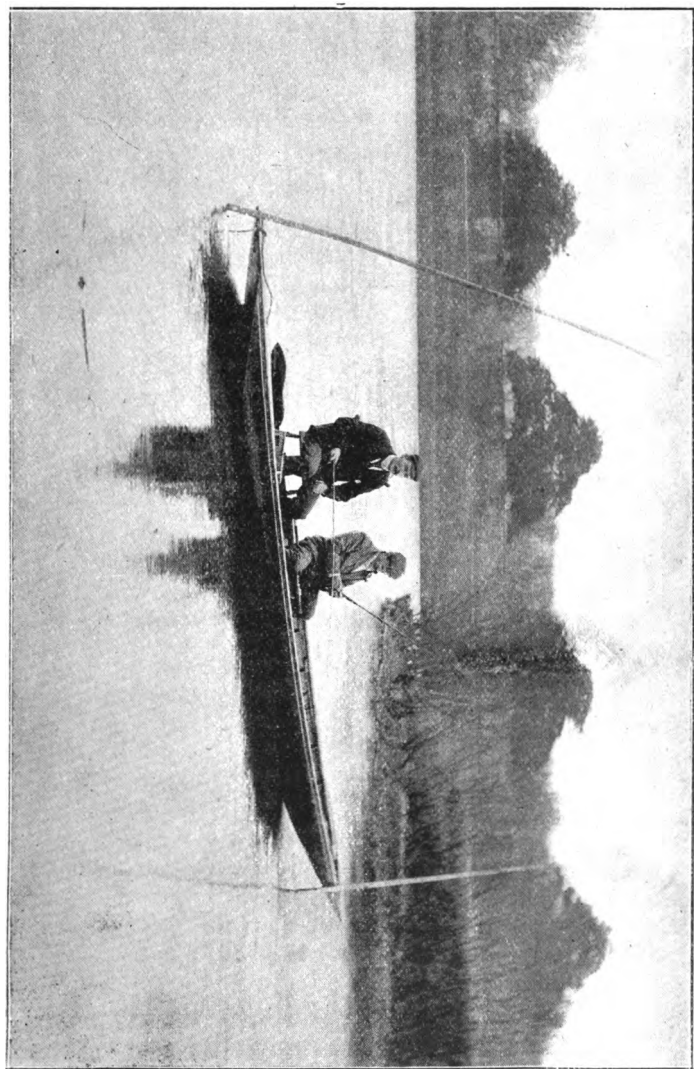
always personally superintend the "baiting," or he may not get the worms thrown in he pays for. Sometimes there may be only one clean piece of bottom in a pool, and to find this the services of the local man are absolutely essential. If the bottom is

covered with big stones, and piles stick up here and there, any amount of tackle will be lost, and very few fish taken. The foulest bottoms always bear the most fish. A rypeck should be put in, at least a day before the fishing takes place. The punt can then be moored without disturbance, a stone or weight being dropped quietly over the end where the pole is not. The running tackle for legering should be as fine* as can safely be used, dressed if the angler casts Thames fashion, undressed if he casts off the reel. The stouter of the rods mentioned on page 13 is best for this fishing.

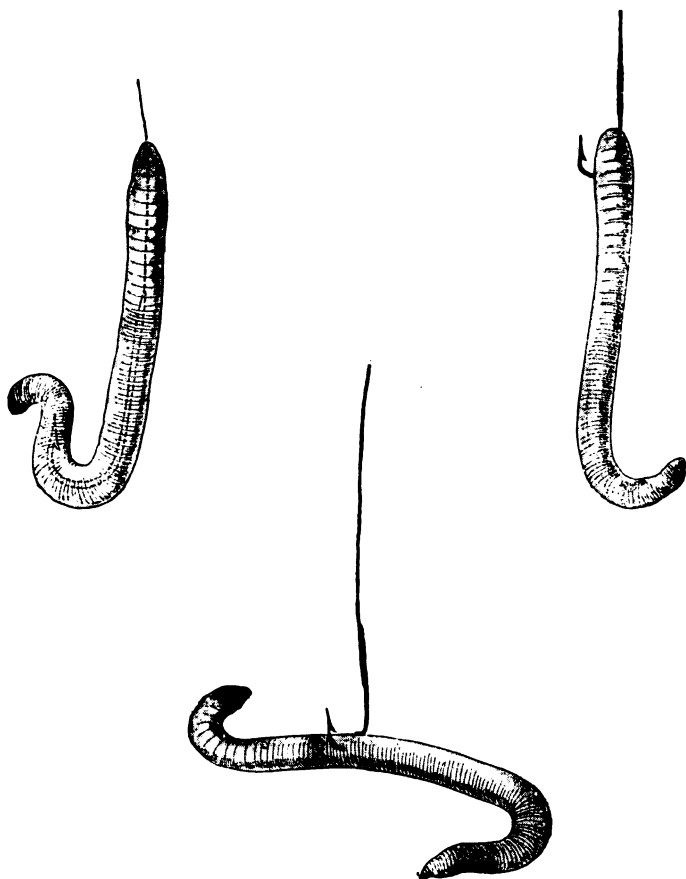
A word now as to ground-baiting. About a thousand lobworms are required.† Pick out a hundred small ones without rings (maiden lobes) for hook-baits, and scour them carefully. Throw five hundred above the swim (see pages 9, 10, and 62) early one morning, three hundred the next, and try the swim the morning after,

* The late Francis Francis once caught a barbel weighing 6½ lb. on a single hair. The fish was hooked in the back fin, and took three and a half hours to kill. I know of no more remarkable feat in the annals of angling.

† In very large pools, where the fish are numerous, as much as ten times this quantity of worms is sometimes used with advantage.



A THAMES BACKWATER.



VARIOUS METHODS OF BAITING WITH WORMS.

The hooks are drawn the actual size. The more modern method of simply catching a small hook in the head or middle of the worm has been attended with marked success. The worm keeps alive for some time and is doubtless more attractive to the fish than when threaded on a large hook. The drawback to the former method is that the worm is apt to crawl about the bottom, and get under stones, &c. sometimes causing the hook to catch in something.

using the balance of worms for casting in now and again while fishing. I prefer to throw in the worms whole, as the big fish get them. Dace or small fry eat up broken worms. Never give the final dose of ground-bait less than twenty hours before you fish. It is very difficult to advise about the method of casting in worms. In some pools the worms may be thrown in loose, and they will work round and round the eddy until eaten; in others they would get swept away at once. In these latter, it is best to place the worms in clay balls, or in a little net weighted with a stone, and drop them only a few yards above where the leger tackle will lie. Another plan is to let the worms work into a turf, and throw the worm-laden turf into the swim. Great judgment is required in ground-baiting. The hook-bait should be similar to the ground-bait, but finer in quality. If the hook-bait is greaves, use a ground-bait of chopped greaves, made into balls with potato and meal. Greaves and cheese are, for one reason, bad ground-baits, sickening the fish for some days. One dose of cheese, and that a small one, is always sufficient. More does positive harm.

On coming to fish at 5 a.m. or 6 a.m., moor the punt quietly, throw in half a dozen worms—broken this time—being careful to throw them so that they sink in the right spot. Then select a worm, dip it in a pan of sand or sawdust, and thread it on a No. 1 sliced hook, commencing at the head, and leaving only $\frac{1}{2}$ in. of tail hanging loose. Cast out, let the leger sink, wind in line until it comes taut, and, with the line over the first finger and under the other fingers of the right hand, wait patiently for a bite. Don't strike at the slightest touch, but only at decided bites. On hooking a fish, hold him as hard as the tackle will stand for a few seconds; this pulls the hook* home. Then play him carefully, keeping him clear of old piles, &c., and the punt-pole. If you have repeated bites and misses, and find the head of the worm crushed, put on only the head portion, so threaded that the head is on the point of the hook, and you will very likely

* I always file off half the barb of the hook when angling for leather-mouthed fish, such as barbel, chub, and carp. A touch or two with the file on each side of the hook is also an advantage.

catch some large dace. When dace bite freely in these swims, the barbel are not often there. If the barbel bite shyly, put on a much smaller hook, and try a cast with the worm hooked either through the middle or the head. The bait can then crawl about the bottom, and is very attractive, but may get under stones, &c. Many good barbel-fishers follow this plan, and I am not sure that it is not the best always. The shank of the hook should be coloured to match the worm (see page 53). It is as well to stain the gut below the lead a light brown, to match the bottom, and it should be finer than the gut above the lead, so that, if the tackle catches in the bottom, the inevitable break is near the hook.

Float-fishing for Barbel is carried on with Nottingham tackle similar to, but, as a rule, heavier than, that described on page 88. The spot should be baited beforehand, and the angler casts in a few pieces of worms before taking a swim. The swim has, of course, to be picked out for its uniformly level bottom, and it should be close to a hole containing barbel. Float-fishing has this disadvantage, that the angler can usually only fish near, and not in, the baited hole, and has, therefore, to get the barbel out of their lair by judicious baiting. Barbel are not found every year in the same quarters, so that the angler should notice carefully where the fish are in the habit of leaping, and be guided by that evidence in the choice of his swims. In float-fishing, the bait must trip along the bottom. If the swim runs shallow, the angler should let his tackle go until it stops; then hold it a little while—the bait, of course, resting on the ground. The farther the float from the angler, the harder must be the strike. It is time to strike when the float goes under.

Another method of float-fishing for barbel is termed “tight-corking.” The angler plumbs so that 1ft. or more (the stronger the current, the longer the line below the float) of gut rests on the bottom. He casts the tackle out some distance, and works it down stream as far as it will go by keeping up the point of his rod as the line runs out, which checks the float and causes the bait to rise from the bottom. When the float is over the fish, he holds it there until he has a bite. This is a

very deadly method, and can be followed where the bottom is a little uneven. The best swims for the purpose are those which shallow at a little distance from the angler. The float has to be a rather large one (most writers say cork, but I much much prefer quill when I can get one large enough), as a goodly number of shots are necessary to keep the bait down when the float is checked. In barbel, as in all other, fishing, the angler should use as small a float and as few shots as the depth and rate of the current will allow. At the same time, fish are often left uncaught by too few shots being used in swift swims, the bait, in consequence, not keeping near enough to the bottom. Of course, when the swim is very deep, a sliding float (see page 26) will have to be used. Float tackle is particularly useful for fishing shallow swims—3ft. to 5ft. deep—into which barbel come when the river is discoloured. When float-fishing, the angler should be very careful not to over-feed the fish: nothing puts a stop to sport sooner. Nottingham anglers carry half a cocoanut-shell and a pair of scissors. They put three worms into the shell, and clip them into twenty or thirty pieces with the scissors, and use these very small fragments of worm as ground-bait.

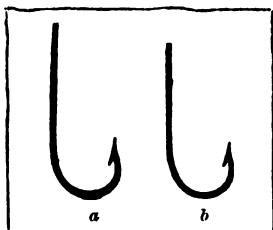
A somewhat similar tackle to that used in tight-corking, very suitable for swims of the non-turbulent order, is shown in Fig. 21, on page 47.

Clay-ball-fishing for Barbel.—This is a very useful method when the water is clear, and the fish more than usually shy. The tackle is a 2yds. length of gut, a No. 4 hook—shank coloured white (see page 20)—and a fragment of stick, lin. in length, fastened crosswise, 12in. above the hook. Into a lump of stiff clay either gentles or greaves are worked, and a piece the size of an orange is squeezed round the stick. The hook is then baited with either gentles or greaves, and the gut above the hook is wound round and pulled into the clay ball, until only the hook-bait is showing. The ball is cast out like a leger, but not so far. The fish come and dig their noses into the clay, and sooner or later one is sure to take the hook-bait—a circumstance which the angler will feel and respond to. A rather stiff rod is desirable, and the tackle need not be very fine. If the

bait is a worm, some broken worms should, of course, be mixed into the clay ball.

I have only to add, or rather repeat, that our friend the barbel is very shy, and that fine fishing for him really pays. Unless the swim is in the midst of numerous tackle-destroyers, such as old piles, big stones, roots of trees, and the like, where large fish must be held—a process necessitating stout gut—use as fine tackle as you reasonably can, and if you ground-bait with discretion, fish with patient carefulness, rise early enough, and make a point of visiting the river when it is coloured by rain, you will, no doubt, catch many barbel, and enjoy grand sport.





CHUB HOOKS (actual size).—*a*, for cheese paste; *b*, for pith, and intervening sizes according to size and description of bait used.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHUB (Leuciscus cephalus).

(CHEVIN, CHEVENDER, LARGE-HEADED DACE, SKELLY).

Attributes—Habits and Haunts—Flies and Fly-fishing—Bait-casting—Fishing with Frogs—Dibbing—Legering—Nottingham Fishing.

A RIGHT good fish to angle for, and a foul bad one to eat, is the chub. By fly-fishers he is ranked between the family of which the salmon is the head, and the bright, dashing, silvery little dace. To both bottom-fisher and fly-fisher he affords capital sport, and, but for his lack of flavour, would have been exterminated long ago, being far from difficult of capture. As it is, the pot-hunter usually leaves him alone; so let us be thankful that our brave friend is as bad in a dinner-plate* as he is good when connected with the angler by a line of fine silk and a fragment of bent wire.

The chub is not found in Ireland or the North of Scotland, but is common in other parts of the United Kingdom, Norfolk, Devon, and Cornwall excepted. He comes under the German term "white fish," and is easily distinguished from his silvery-sided, white-bellied brethren, roach, dace, bream, and rudd, by his broad, short head, and generally chubby appearance. By his black tail, also, and pinkish-white lips, may you know him, and by

* If you will eat him, let it be on the day he is caught. Fillet him, egg and breadcrumb the fillets, and fry in butter. There is another good receipt in the "Compleat Angler."

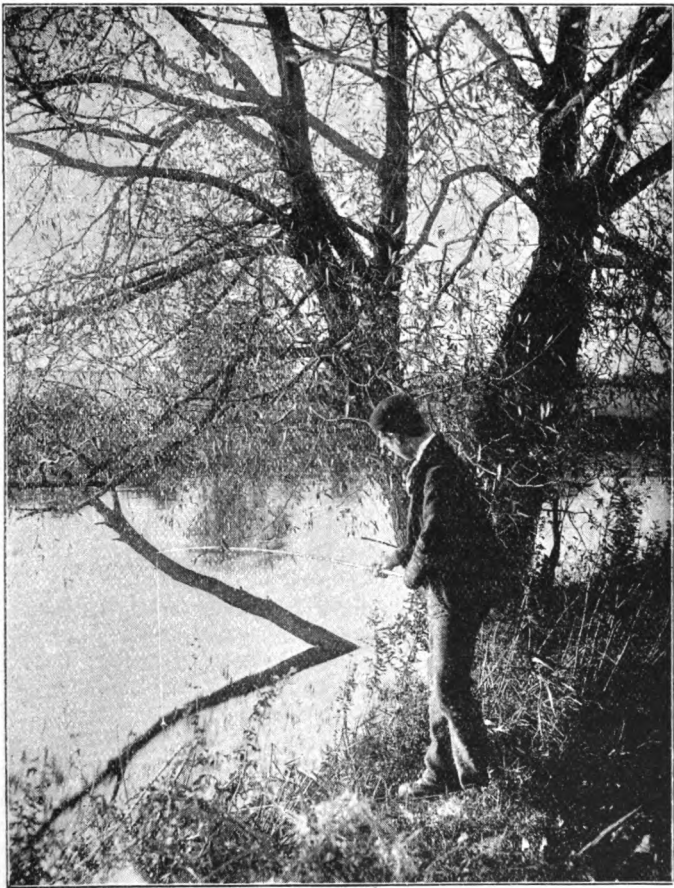
his eyes not being red, as are the eyes of roach and rudd, and by his ventral and anal fins being red, as are *not* the ventral and anal fins of dace. The young of roach and dace may be thus distinguished from the young of chub: In the former, the anal fin is concave; in the latter, slightly convex.

Chub are often caught weighing 4lb., sometimes 5lb., and very rarely 6lb. and 7lb. Stuff (with the stuffing peculiar to taxidermists) any chevin of 5lb. or over—that is, if you collect specimen fish. Chub spawn in May, and afterwards—in June—stay for a week or two in the swift-running shallows to scour themselves. Later on* they retire to their regular haunts, which are, for the most part, holes overhung by trees, where the stream is sufficient to keep the bottom from being muddy. Here let me observe that few fish (tench and bream excepted) are found in summer swimming over a muddy bottom—not so much because they dislike the mud as because they love the stream, and where the stream is, the mud is not. Under an upright, clay bank chub are always to be found, and also where withies or other bushes grow out in the water. I would as soon fish by the side of a steep clay bank as any place in a river. Under and near bridges are also very likely spots.

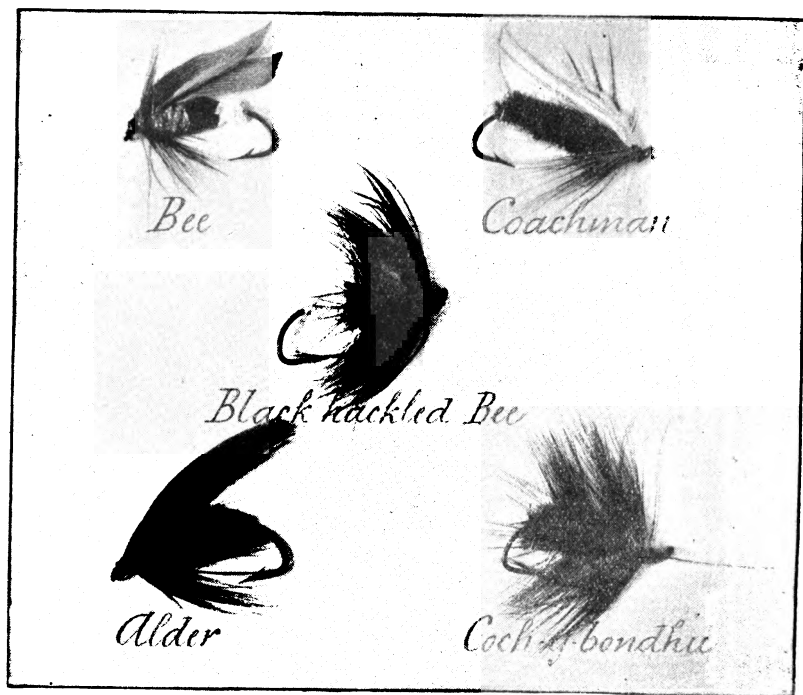
Chub are sociable fish, and, for the most part, make up little family parties, and reside together in holes; but stray, good-for-nothing fish, the outcasts of scaly society, are to be found scattered about the river, either on shallows, among the weeds, or along banks, in water varying from 1ft. to 15ft. in depth. These pariahs fall a prey to the fly-fisher in particular.

Fly-fishing and Bait-casting for Chub is capital sport where it can be pursued with any chance of success—*i.e.*, in rivers but little disturbed by traffic, or in disturbed streams, early in the morning, before the disturbances commence. The best tackle is a stiff, 11ft. or 12ft., greenheart or split-cane fly-rod, a heavy, dressed, tapered silk line, and 3yds. of moderately fine, undrawn gut. As to the fly, I hardly know what to recommend, there are so many good ones. Mr. W. Senior ("Red Spinner"),

* In much-disturbed rivers, such as the Thames, chub only remain on the shallows a few weeks; but in quieter waters, such as the Bedfordshire Ouse, they are found in quite shallow water as long as the weather is warm, and in such places they afford great sport to the fly-fisher.



A FAMOUS CHUB-HOLE.



CHUB FLIES.

angling editor of the *Field*, has kindly given me a pattern fly of his own design, which he has found very killing. It is dressed on a Snecky Limerick grilse hook. The body is of chenille tinsel, with a tail, $\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, of white kid. Close to the head is wound a long coch-y-bondu hackle. For dark days this fly should, I think, be dressed with a dark shade of tinsel and the coch-y-bondu hackle, but for bright days with a brighter body and ordinary red hackle.

The favourite chub-fly of the late Mr. Francis Francis was of grilse size—body, silver tinsel, a furnace hackle (dark red with black centre) wrapped round it, a few turns of black heron over that at shoulder, an under-wing of a few sprigs of emerald peacock harl, and an over-wing of dark turkey; and for a tail, a tag of white kid glove or wash-leather. Another favourite of his had a yellow crewel body, with red hackle and a dun turkey wing. The two flies which I have most used are: First, a large coachman, with body leaded if used in the Thames or other large rivers (except on shallows); and, second, an imitation beetle—body, rusty-red pig's wool, ribbed with gold tinsel; legs, bronze peacock harl; back, a cock's black tail-feather, tied down at head and tail. The former fly is best when the water is clear, and at night; the latter kills in slightly coloured water. Other good flies are large alders, and palmers, red or black, with peacock harl bodies, and in particular one dressed with a badger hackle. Artificial bees, wasps, cockchafers, and beetles are killing, especially if allowed to sink a foot or more under the water. At the commencement of the season, the well-known Alexandra fly often kills well. In certain rivers chub, during the rise of the May-fly, sometimes take nothing else, and require as much fishing for as trout.

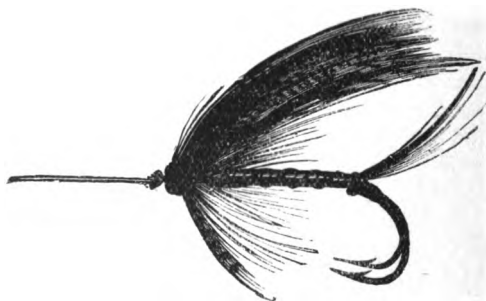
Chub like a good mouthful; but the size of the fly should depend on the size of the chub and the river. In the Thames I prefer large, heavy flies, and sink them; in smaller and shallower streams, smaller and lighter flies, which hardly sink at all. I have, indeed, found a dry fly, which rests on the surface, sometimes kill chub when they would not look at a sunk fly. The dry fly should be tried when the chub are seen rising, and each fish can be fished for. Chub-flies should

always be tied on eyed hooks, or attached to gut loops. The strongest way of fastening them to the gut cast is shown in Fig. 31.

In small rivers which are not navigable, the fly-fisher must, of course, fish from the bank, taking care to keep as much out of sight as he possibly can, fishing across, and rather up than down, stream. In larger rivers, such as the Thames, fishing is best carried on from a light punt, boat, or canoe. The angler must



The Knot Open.



The Knot Pulled Tight.

FIG 31. METHOD OF FASTENING GUT TO FLIES MOUNTED ON EYED HOOKS.

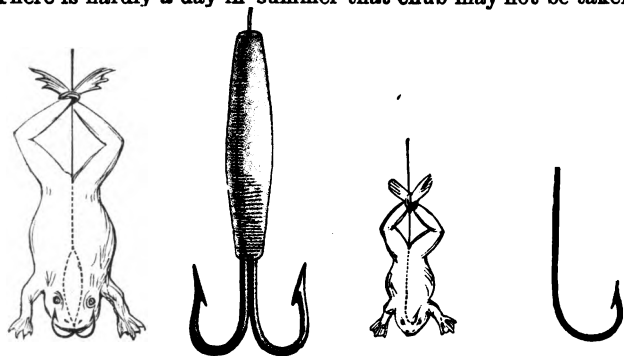
not stand up, must not be clad in bright flannel raiment, and must not rock his craft by too energetic casting. A good boatman is half the battle: slowly and quietly he allows the boat to drift down stream, *at an even distance from the bank*, checking it or urging it on by noiseless touches with the sculls as occasion may require. The angler kneels, sits, or crouches in the stern, and casts his fly with a good splash close to the bank, *under overhanging boughs*, and in every

spot where there is the least chance of finding a chub. The length of his cast must depend on his skill, but very long casts are not necessary if the angler keeps low in the boat, and the boat is worked noiselessly. If a heavy-led fly is used, the angler must keep a keen eye on his line, and strike directly he sees it tighten. In shallow water, he will often see the chub swim out from the bank and take the fly. After casting, the angler should wait about four seconds, then draw the fly slowly about a foot nearer him, then wait again for a second or two, and, if nothing comes of it, cast elsewhere. The short draw of the bait tightens the line, and enables bites, or rises—as you may please to call them—to be felt, and also, I fancy, makes the bait more attractive.

I am convinced that chub often seize hold of a fly under water and leave it again without our knowing anything about it. Many chub-fishers put a few gentles on the hook of their fly. This practice usually adds to the basket, for the chub not only take the fly-baits more readily, but keep hold longer after they have seized it. A piece of kid glove, or parchment out of a fly-book, is not a bad substitute for the gentle. When a fish is hooked, he should be held at first, to prevent him getting into his lair among the roots; the boat should be brought out into the centre of the stream, and the fish played as far away from the bank as possible.

Small frogs, black slugs, crayfish tail, gentles, lobworms, and many other baits, may be cast like, and with greater success than, the artificial fly. Those I name are the best baits, and I have placed them in order of merit. As soon as the grass is cut, tiny frogs will be found in hundreds in the meadows by the river. Boys will collect dozens, and these valuable baits can be kept for weeks in a live-bait can, with a little damp moss or grass, which should be changed every few days. To bait with *small* frogs, take a No. 4 Round Bend hook, file down half the barb, and sharpen the point; bite on a No. 1 shot, $\frac{1}{2}$ in. above the shank. Put the point of the hook in at the frog's vent, and out at the top of its head; tie the hind legs together, above the shot. To kill the frog, hold it by the hind legs, and fillip it on the head with the finger. Hooks baited with frogs are shown at

Fig. 32. If a large frog is used—for chub 1lb. and upwards will take a very large one—the hook should be double, and the shank leaded. The end of the gut should be put in at the frog's mouth, and out at its vent, with a baiting-needle. The legs are tied above a small knot in the gut. This being a heavy bait, it should be cast underhand, as if it were a paternoster (see page 70, in the chapter on Perch). The frog once cast, whether small or large, should be allowed to sink, and go with the stream, as a pull of the line is certain to scare any admiring chub which is contemplating a banquet. With these natural baits it is as well to allow a few seconds before striking. There is hardly a day in summer that chub may not be taken by



Large frog, for Cast- ing with Perch-rod. Hook for Large Frog (actual size). Small frog, for Cast- ing with Fly-rod. Hook for Small Frog (actual size).

FIG. 32. BAITING WITH DEAD FROGS FOR CHUB.

this means, provided the angler keeps out of sight of the fish and casts dexterously. Even a practical fly-fisherman will sometimes find a difficulty in casting these heavy baits. I believe the whole secret consists in allowing plenty of time between the backward and the forward cast. If the line is not given time to extend nearly straight behind the angler, the cast is usually a bad one. With light flies this point is not so important.

Black slugs are best cut down the middle, turned inside out, wrapped round the hook, and tied on with white cotton—a noisome operation, which results in a deadly bait. Both slugs and lobworms are best on Sliced hooks (see page 21), or on a hook

the shank end of which has been softened in the flame of a candle, and bent out as shown in Fig. 33. Gentles are much used on the Thames for casting. About eighteen should be placed on a No. 5 hook, and a few added every quarter of an hour. Many anglers prefer a small triangle, but I always fancy I do best with the single hook.

Dibbing is another method of surface fishing for chub. It requires no particular skill, but great care and caution. The tackle is a stiff bamboo rod, an undressed silk line, a pierced pistol bullet, 1ft. of not too fine gut, and a hook, the size of which depends on the bait used. Bees, wasps, black beetles, small frogs, cock-chafers, grasshoppers, moths, large flies—all are good baits for the purpose. The bullet is threaded on to the running line, and kept from slipping on to the gut by the knot joining the gut to the line. To dibb successfully, learn the haunts of the fish by peering cautiously over the banks the previous day. Knowing, then, a chubby spot, attach to the hook one of the baits mentioned, reel up the line until the bullet touches the top of the rod, approach the river-side on tiptoe, and put the bait, which dangles 1ft. below the rod tip, through some convenient hole in the branches—for I presume trees overshadow the spot. When the bait overhangs the water, wait a few seconds, for the movement of the rod may have aroused the suspicions of the fish; then slowly unwind line—which the weight of the bullet draws out—until the bait just touches the water, where it should kick about for a while. If no fish seizes the bait in four or five minutes, try another spot. When a fish is hooked, hold him tight, and get him out as seemeth best under the circumstances. Catching a chub usually frightens others, and it is best to go on to another place.

Bottom Fishing for Chub is carried on either with the leger or with float tackle. Legering for chub differs little from legering for other fish (see pages 27 and 75). The weight of the bullet must, of course, depend on the strength of the stream. A suitable bait (cheese, greaves, lobworms, &c.) must be used,



FIG. 33. HOOK
WITH BENT
SHANK, FOR
WORM - CAST-
ING.

and the leger must be cast where the chub are, the angler keeping as much out of sight as possible, and casting the tackle neatly, and without undue disturbance of the water. Legering is sometimes very useful for fishing swims which cannot be got at with float tackle.

The only method of float fishing for chub worthy our consideration is that practised by the Trent anglers, and already described in the chapter on Roach, on pages 43. and 51, to which I beg to refer the reader. The tackle, save that it is rather



FIG. 34. FLOAT
TACKLE FOR
CHUB BAITED
WITH CHEESE.

stronger, is in all respects the same. The rod should be the stouter one described on page 13. It is better to have the quill larger, and the shots heavier, than is really necessary to keep the bait below the float, as with somewhat heavy tackle the bait can be let down stream more steadily than with light tackle. The tackle which I find most generally useful in summer carries a pierced swan-shot between two split No. 1 shot, and two No. 3 shots nearer the hook. The illustration (Fig. 34) shows their relative positions, though the float shown is not a very good representation of a quill. I always serve the gut round with silk at the spot where the leads are placed. The hook is shown baited with cheese-paste; the shape into which it is squeezed is very important. Some anglers prefer a triangle, but I hardly ever miss a fish if I bait a single hook carefully.

The point of the hook should be all but through the cheese. If the point is well covered, fish after fish will be missed, the cheese acting as a guard to the hook. I always press down the cheese over the point until I can feel the point with my thumb, when I know that the chub will feel it too. The hook for cheese which I use is a No. 1 Round Bend. Trent anglers use a size or two smaller. The point should always be kept sharp by a touch on each side with a needle or watchmaker's file; and the barb is best filed half away. The shank of the hook for the cheese-bait should be painted (see page 20) with white lead and French

polish, so that if some of the cheese tumbles off, the shank is not conspicuous by its colour. I have mentioned cheese because I believe it to be the best summer bait. That which is old and rotten is most attractive; but it hardens in the water, and should be mixed up into paste with a little butter. As a matter of fact, any cheese will do, and I rarely bother to get any special kind. A good red, soapy American, cannot be put to a better use than as a bait for chub; it requires little or no making into paste. Bread-and-cheese paste is often used with success. Another good summer bait is three or four wasp grubs, which should be baked for a few minutes before being used, or scalded, and then thoroughly dried in bran; and macaroni, ripe plums skinned, blackberries, strawberries, and cherries (the latter particularly under cherry trees overhanging the water) are at times very killing. For the first few weeks of the season chub will take a minnow greedily.

The foregoing are clear-water baits. *If the water is discoloured*, either in winter or in summer, nothing is so good as a well-scoured lobworm. In autumn, greaves, or "scratchings," is a good bait, and in winter nothing is better than pith and brains, particularly in very cold weather. But the water *must* be clear for this bait. Greaves have to be boiled. The white portions are used for the hook. Pith (the spinal cord of a bullock) has also to be prepared; the skin surrounding it should be taken off, and the interior washed in several waters until it is quite white. It does not require boiling or scalding. A piece about the size of a cob-nut should be placed on a No. 4 hook. The brains are used to throw in as ground-bait. Trent anglers chew them, and blow them into the water. But is this really necessary?

To use our float-tackle and baits we, if in a small stream, take up a position on the bank 20yds. or more above a well-known haunt of chub, get the depth in front of us (see pages 37 and 43), and, if the water is clear, put the float so that, to the best of our belief, the bait will be about 6in. to 9in. from the bottom when it reaches the chub. If the water is coloured, we fish close to the bottom. We ought to know something of the swims, the depths, position

of weeds, and so on, or have someone with us who can tell us these particulars. In a strange river we are certain to lose much time and many fish in finding out these details. Well, we cut up a few cubes of cheese (if we are baiting with cheese) with our knife, throw them in, and let our tackle, carefully baited after the manner already described, follow them down stream steadily and without check.* As it reaches the spot where the chub are, our hearts beat a little faster, perhaps, and then down goes the float, up goes the point of the rod, and we feel we are in a good fish. Immediately after striking we reel up as fast as we can, for master chub must not be allowed to go into the roots which project from the bank, and by holding him hard at first the hook is pulled well into his leathern mouth. We try the swim again, and after a trial or two basket another fish, and then move to a fresh spot, for it would probably be useless to continue fishing here. But there are occasions—very rare ones—when as many as a dozen chub may be taken out of one hole.

If we fish from a boat or punt, there must be no flurry, noise, or movement which can give the fish an inkling of our presence. When we are 40 yds. away from the fish, we get close to the bank, and drop down with the stream until we reach the top of the swim. We are careful not to stand up, *to put in no rypecks, and drop no weight*; but our man catches hold of a twig, or holds on to the bank with a boat-hook. From the boat we fish as we did from the bank, and are *certain* of success if the fish have not been disturbed by us or some passer-by.

I would never bait up a spot for chub, but pass from swim to swim, picking up a brace here and a brace there. Even the ground-bait thrown in should be small in quantity, especially if it is cheese or greaves. A pound of cheese will last out a day's chub-fishing, ground-bait and all. Success, of course, depends a good deal on the angler's judgment in so throwing the ground-bait that it reaches the right place; but not so much with chub as with many other fish.

* As a matter of fact, the mere passage of the line through the rings slightly checks the float; and this is desirable, for, if it were otherwise, the float would get in advance of the bait, as rivers flow faster near the surface than lower down.

Many anglers may shrug their shoulders on reading the statement made at the beginning of the chapter, that chub are not particularly difficult to catch. But I know I am right. Izaak Walton truly wrote that the chub is the "fearfullest of fish;" but he is also the most greedy, and one of the most stupid. The sight of a man in motion, an unnatural movement in a bait, a footfall on the bank, or a stir in the water, will send chub to the bottom at once, and stop their feeding; *but* if you do not frighten them, and can place the bait before them in a fairly natural manner—as, for instance, a fly which seems to drop from the trees above, or a fragment of cheese drifting down stream—then chub will take the bait almost as certainly as many persons who read this chapter will not attend to half the directions I have been at some pains to give. Thus it is that, when the water is low and bright, the careful chub-fisher makes the best bags, for his bait is seen far and near by many fish, while he himself can, by using suitable tackle, keep so far off as not to be noticed. I have known a 4lb. chub, whose age should have given him wisdom, to be caught in 2ft. of water, when half-a-dozen split shot, a good-sized quill, tipped with red, and a part of the running line, were all visible to him. But he saw no harm in those things, and took the bait. Had he known a human being was about, I could no more have hoped to catch that chub than I can hope to make a careless person a good fisherman.



DACE HOOKS (actual size).—*a*, for dibbing with natural flies ; *b*, for gentles or paste.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DACE (*Leuciscus vulgaris*). (*DARE OR DART*).

Habits and Haunts—Bottom-fishing—Baits and Ground-baits—Flies and Fly-fishing—Eyed Hooks and Knots—Blow-line Fishing.

DACE are bright, silvery, graceful, slender little fish, which often find their way into the roach-fisher's creel. In colour they are almost entirely silvery, and the fins lack that tinge of red which is noticeable in the chub and the roach. They are easily distinguished from a small chub by the anal fin, which in the dace is almost colourless, but in the chub pink. The dace is common to all rivers containing coarse fish, and is frequently found in trout-streams, to the detriment of the trout; but it is absent from Ireland. It is rarely, or never, found in ponds or lakes which are not fed by streams of some kind or another. Dace are very rarely taken over 1lb. in weight; indeed, few anglers have caught one even so heavy as that.

Dace spawn in the spring, and then, like chub, barbel, and several other varieties of fish, spend a few weeks in very shallow, swift waters, for the purpose of scouring themselves. Later on they spread over the river in all sorts and conditions of swims, but in the evening, during the hot months, may always be looked for on gravelly swallows. In winter, they retire to deep water, and even in late summer the large fish will usually be found in swims of considerable depth. They are often found

in barbel-swims, to the great discomfiture of the barbel-fisher,* who strikes again and again without catching anything, and, perhaps, in the end, by constant striking, drives the barbel away, or, at least, sends them off the feed. As a general rule, dace prefer sharper streams than do roach, and the remarks on fishing in coloured water (see pages 8 and 53), apply to them.

Bottom-fishing and Baits for Dace.—The float-tackle used for this purpose is practically the same as that advised for roach, described on page 25. As the dace swims as often in mid-water, or close to the surface, as on the bottom, it is not as necessary to fish as near the bottom as we should if angling for roach. Many large dace, however, fall a victim to the seductions of a lobworm, particularly the head portion arrayed on a leger. As dace generally haunt swifter streams than do roach, the float-tackle has to be heavier shotted than is usual in roach swims. Dace are sharp biters, and the angler should strike quickly on seeing a movement of the float.

The two favourite baits for these fish are gentles and red-worms. Caddis baits are also very good. In the late summer and autumn a lobworm will take the largest fish. I once baited up a very quiet, deep corner near Henley-on-Thames for tench, and my baiting partly resulted in a dozen fine perch. During the morning I was dreadfully bothered by some fish which kept taking the float under, but which I could not hook. An examination of my bait showed me that the fish, whatever they were, only seemed to touch the head of the worm, which was, as usual, up the shank of the hook, so I threaded the next worm on with the tail of the shank, and the head over the point. I then took nearly every bite, and soon had more than a dozen of the finest dace I caught that year. The incident enlightened me considerably as to why one has so many bites from dace when barbel-fishing without any fish getting hooked; and since then, I have repeatedly found that dace prefer the head to the tail of the lobworm, at least in the Thames. For the redworm, I like a very small set of Stewart tackle (see page 54), and the same arrangement answers very well for the lobworm. All roach-

* When this occurs, try baiting with the head of the worm on a smaller hook, or use Stewart tackle.

baits will take dace, but I have already mentioned the best. Both roach and dace are very variable in their feeding. One day, in the Loddon, I found the roach take wheat, and the dace gentles. The following day I could only catch dace on wheat, and roach on gentles.

Dace can very often be caught without the use of ground-bait, but when fished for from a punt in the Thames fashion (see page 49), a ground-bait consisting of balls of clay, bran, and a few carrion gentles, is nearly always used. The clay is very useful, as it sinks the balls of ground-bait right in the swim, which is usually rather a rapid one. The more feeding ground-bait recommended for roach (see page 35) also answers for dace, provided it is made stiff enough to withstand the stream, and contains a small pebble to make it sink quickly; but it should be thrown in very sparingly, as dace are small feeders. If the angler is fishing after the Nottingham fashion (see page 43), he should occasionally throw in a few of the baits he is fishing with, be they gentles or redworms, care being taken that they are thrown high enough above the swim, so that they reach the fish in the swim. It is no use ground-baiting the fish 20yds. down the river when your float and tackle only travel 15yds. Raking the bottom in lieu of ground-bait is often practised with success on the Lower Thames. A gudgeon-rake (see Chap. VIII.) is used, and the raking is usually done behind the punt.

Fly-fishing for Dace is very pretty sport, and certainly not inferior to the trout-fishing which is obtained in some waters I could name. Dace rise best to a fly during August, September, and October; and in June, while the May-fly is on, in rivers visited by that lovely insect. They will often rise freely all day, but the evening is the best time. The tackle is similar to that used for Welsh or Devonshire trout: A light, 10ft. fly-rod—hexagonal split cane for preference—striking well from the point, a dressed tapered silk line to suit the rod (the stiffer the rod, the heavier the line), and a length of gut, called a “cast” or “collar,” of 8ft. or 9ft., tapered down to the very finest-drawn gut. Two or three flies may be used—one, of course, at the fine end; another, called a dropper, on a piece of very

fine gut 4in. long, should be placed 2ft. higher; and if a third is used, it can be placed 2ft. above the first dropper. Less gut is desirable when the casting has to be against a strong wind. Beginners should content themselves with one fly and casting a short line.

There are many ways of fastening the droppers to the gut-collar, but the neatest knot and, therefore, the best for dace-fishing, is one designed by Mr. R. B. Marston (shown in Fig. 35). The only objection to it is that the flies are not easily changed; but in fly-fishing for dace a change of flies is not often necessary. The knot is shown loose; it has, of course, to be pulled tight. The gut-collar, fly, and one or more droppers, is called a "cast" of flies.

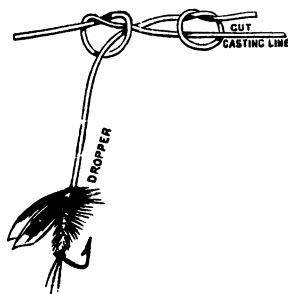


FIG 35. MARSTON KNOT FOR DROPPER FLIES.

The usual method of fly-fishing for dace is to cast the three flies across or down stream, and then to draw them over the water, striking gently, but as *quickly as possible*, when a fish rises at one of the flies. The beginner had best practice on rather a sharp stream, which will extend his line when he makes bungling casts (as he is sure to do), and so give him a chance of catching something. Blank days are very discouraging to beginners. Veteran anglers usually bear them philosophically.

There is a method of fly-fishing which is very deadly, and will take dace in still water on a hot, bright, calm day, when the ordinary method is no use whatever. It is known as dry-fly fishing, and is *now* almost the only way by which the highly educated trout of the Hampshire chalk streams can be induced to take the artificial fly. Only one fly is used, which is tied to float—that is, with an extra amount of (cock's) hackle, and with split wings, like the natural fly. It is cast lightly, about 2ft. in front of rising fish, and allowed to float on the surface of the stream, and go down with the current just as a natural fly would do which had alighted on the surface of the

water. Any pull of the line by the angler, or shake of the rod-top, destroys the illusion. When the fly gets wet, it has to be dried by repeated waves of the rod in the air. Large dace sometimes rise in the evening in the deep, quiet reaches of rivers. They will then take the dry fly, and the dry fly only.

It is a great assistance when fishing the dry fly to grease the line with red-deer's kidney suet or—an excellent substitute—mutton kidney suet. This causes the line to float. The floating powers of the fly may be increased if the hackle and body is very lightly touched with odourless paraffin. Special bottles and brushes for this purpose are sold in the tackle shops. How flies are cast and worked I have described under the head of ANGLING FOR GAME FISH.

The trout-fisher should have no difficulty in finding, in his book, a few small flies which will kill dace; but if flies have to be specially purchased, I should recommend black palmers (with silver twist on body), red palmers, and coachmen (a few of the last-named tied with upright split wings for dry-fly fishing), all of which will be rendered more killing by the addition of a very short tail of white wool, or white kid glove. Mr. R. B. Marston, editor of the *Fishing Gazette*, tells me that the best dace-fly he knows has a silver tinsel body, light wings, and light grey hackle. I have not yet had an opportunity of trying it, but feel sure it is a good fly. Quill gnats and small govenors will also be found killing, and a few tied with upright wings for dry-fly fishing may prove very useful. Dace also rise well to red-spinners and yellow duns. In dace-fishing, as in trout-fishing, the angler will lose nothing by noting the flies on the water, and if there is a great hatch of any particular fly, he will certainly be rewarded if he puts up an imitation of that fly, and fishes with it. When a rise of May-fly is on, dace-will take the artificial freely. At such times the red-spinner is occasionally a good fly.

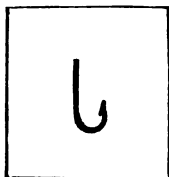
The most modern form of hook for artificial flies is known as the eyed hook. The shank of the hook is terminated by an eye, to which the angler fastens the gut. I find little or no difference in the hooking powers of eyed hooks and hooks bound to gut. Flies on eyed hooks are economical, for as soon

as the gut wears near the fly it can be re-tied. The angler can also put on gut of any degree of fineness. The one disadvantage of eyed hooks—a very slight one—is the trouble of tying on the gut. One of the easiest and best methods of fastening the fly to the gut is the Turle knot, illustrated on page 21.

As dace will take the artificial fly, they will, of course, take the natural insect, and a bluebottle, house, or any other fly of sufficient size, properly offered to them, is almost certain to be accepted. The best tackle for this purpose is the finest silk line procurable, 1ft. of fine gut, and a No. 10 Round Bend hook. The longer the rod, the better. A fly is impaled on the hook, and the angler, taking his stand with his back to the wind, allows his bait to be blown out in front of him, when, by lowering the point of his rod, he causes the fly to alight on the water. All fish which rise to the fly are to be caught in this way.

Dace, when in good condition—i.e., after August—are by no means bad eating, if really well cooked, and are held in high esteem by the Jews, who fry them exquisitely in oil.





HOOK FOR GUDGEON (actual size).

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GUDGEON (Gobio fluviatilis).

*Habits and Haunts—Tackle and Baits—Thames and other
Methods of Gudgeon-fishing.*



LITTLE fish, which takes the bait as eagerly as the most impatient angler could wish all through the hot weather, when no other fish, except chub, can be persuaded to look at the most tempting morsels, can only be described as amiable. The amiability of the gudgeon extends, indeed, to the table, where, after having been carefully egged, bread-crumbed, and fried, he makes a most delicious dish, as any visitor to a Thames-side hotel, or restaurant on the banks of the Seine, can no doubt testify. Moreover, as a bait for large perch he is unrivalled, and is by no means despised by our friend *Esox Lucius*. In shape, the gudgeon is something like a barbel, with two barbs and an overhanging upper lip. His colour on the back is brown, with slight silvery sheen over the sides and belly. He rarely grows longer than 6in. or 7in.

Habits and Haunts of Gudgeon.—Gudgeon spawn in May, and are very prolific. So numerous are they in the Thames, that it is no uncommon thing for twenty dozen to be brought in as the result of a day's fishing by two anglers. I have known an angler to catch sixteen dozen to his own rod in one day. Gudgeon-fishing begins about the end of June, provided the weather is warm; but these fish bite best in August and September. In June and July they should be fished for in water

varying from 2ft. to 4ft. deep, where the bottom is sandy or gravelly, and the stream moderate. In September the finest fish will often be taken in swims from 10ft. to 12ft. in depth. The very best swims are always those just on the edge of holes. As soon as the cold weather sets in, gudgeon shift to deep water, and do not often take a bait. Like barbel, they probably eat very little in winter. The weather cannot be too hot or the sun too bright for gudgeon-fishing.

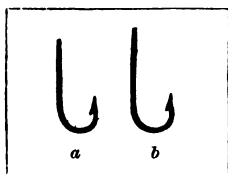
Tackle and Baits.—The float-tackle used for roach (see page 25) is suitable for gudgeon, but a small shot should be bitten on 4in. above the hook, which should be a very small one, and have its shank painted red. I need hardly repeat that the float should be as small, and the shot as few, as the depth and force of the current will allow. The gut (many anglers prefer hair) cannot be too fine, and the hook should be very small—No. 12 or No. 13. The bait is a fragment of worm, redworm being the best. When the gudgeon run very large, I put on a larger hook and about half a redworm; but, as a rule, I find I take most fish by threading on to the hook a piece of worm not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in length; it usually suffices to catch a dozen fish or more. I would advise the use of light running tackle, even for gudgeon, for other fish—notably perch—are often hooked.

The Thames Method of Gudgeon-fishing is the best with which I am acquainted. The essentials are: A punt, two rypecks (i.e., mooring poles); a rake, the head of which contains four or five teeth and weighs from 5lb. to 10lb., and the handle of which is about 18ft. long; the light float-tackle above-mentioned, and some well-scoured redworms or brandlings. It is also as well to take out our heavier rod and a paternoster, which we can bait with small gudgeon or minnows, and lay out by the side of the gudgeon-swim. If we do this, we shall surely catch a perch or two, and shall add, both directly and indirectly, to the weight of our basket; for when perch are allowed to remain, they assuredly drive the gudgeon out of the swim, or, at least, stop their feeding. Well, all things being ready, our fisherman, or a brother angler, punts us to a suitable swim, somewhere out of the wind, and moors the punt across the stream in the manner

described on page 50. We sit facing down stream, precisely as if we were going to fish for roach, plumb the depth, arrange our float so that the bait all but touches the bottom, bait, and take a trial swim or two. The gudgeon may be there in great quantities, and if so, no raking is requisite for some time. We strike sharply, but not hard, on seeing the slightest depression of the float, and gudgeon come fast into the punt. I must not forget that we so shot our lines that only the tip of the float is in view, and therefore the float goes under water at a very slight pull from the fish. After a while the fish leave off biting. Then the rake is brought into requisition, and the bottom is well raked in front of the punt. This muddies the water, and stirs up various items of fish food, and the gudgeon swarm up to the punt to feed. When that swim is fished out we try another, and as we count up our dozens we smile at the infatuated individuals who *will* waste their time trying to catch jack or roach on this blazing hot summer's day.

In small, shallow streams, where the fishing is done from the bank, a long-handled garden rake will be found useful to rake the bottom with; and sometimes anglers wade in, stir up the sand or gravel with their feet, to bring the gudgeon near them, and fish while standing in the water. It may be inferred from this, and rightly so, that the gudgeon is not a shy fish. Gudgeon placed in ponds have increased wonderfully in a few years. In such places I have *heard*, on very good authority, that they will sometimes rise to a fly, but have never seen such a thing happen.

I have observed that, in late autumn, gudgeon show a partiality for still water. In 1897, the early winter months of which were very mild, I caught these fish in quite shallow swims in November, but the greater number were to be taken just above and below the lock gates in dead water.



CARP HOOKS (actual size).—*a*, for paste; *b*, for worms. Slightly larger sizes for very large fish.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CARP (Cyprinus carpio).

Habits and Haunts—Baits—Two Days' Carp-fishing—Float-fishing—A Self-cocking Float—Legering.

NO fish is found in the British Isles which has a larger brain, or is more difficult of capture, or, strange to say, is more easily tamed, than the common carp. In some waters, indeed, in which these fish abound, there is no record of one having been caught by the angler. From the carefully executed engraving of the common carp it will be observed that this interesting fish has very large scales, one long black fin, and a barbule hanging from each side of its mouth. Its back and sides are a golden bronze, shading to a yellowish-white on the belly; its fins are a dark brown. In England, carp over 15lb. are rarely taken by anglers, but specimens are occasionally netted weighing 20lb. and over. On the Continent it is very much heavier, even going to double that weight. In Germany carp-culture is carried on as a business, and the fish bred are fairly good eating; but the common, undomesticated English carp is a horrid fish, so far as its edible qualities are concerned. Gold and silver fish are species of carp; they are easily caught with roach-tackle and baits.

Carp spawn in May or June, and soon get into condition. They are found more commonly in lakes and ponds than in rivers. In still waters their haunts are soon discovered, as they swim, or lie, close to the surface when not feeding, and are

easily seen. At such times they often make a peculiar sucking noise. In rivers, they like quiet holes among weeds, and are sometimes found in barbel-swims. They hardly feed at all in winter, the best fishing being during the summer months. They sometimes bite well after a thunderstorm.

The following are good carp-baits: Redworms and brandlings, paste sweetened with honey, gentles, parboiled potatoes, green peas, boiled wheat, green wheat, wasp-grubs dipped in honey after having been put on the hook, paste made of old cheese, paste made of bread, soft roe of herring, and a little wool, cherries, and almost any kind of grub, worm, or grain. Any bait used must be perfectly clean and sweet. The ground-bait should, as a general rule, resemble the hook-bait, but be coarser and less enticing.

Float-fishing for Carp is an amusement at which many anglers have failed for want of proper precautions. It is the method best suited for lakes and ponds, where the angler fishes from the bank. For fishing from a boat or punt for carp, the leger is usually more suitable, as the bait has to be cast some distance away. We will suppose now that we are on a visit to a friend who has a fine sheet of water well stocked with very large and, consequently, very shy carp. Few of these fish have ever been taken, and their favourite baits are not known. We decide to devote one day to float-fishing, and the next to fishing with the leger, and to try sweet paste, worms, and potatoes—the latter on the leger. On our arrival our host laughingly says we shall catch nothing—a remark which puts us on our mettle, and we straightway sally forth and examine the water. The keeper joins us, and after a chat with him we select four places for float-fishing from the bank, and also decide to bait up with potatoes two deep holes some distance from the shore. It is now about 11 a.m., so, not to lose any time, we have some potatoes boiled in their skins, all the bits of crust in the bread-pan scalded, and set a boy to dig diligently for worms of all descriptions. The scalded bread, when soft enough, is kneaded up with some bran and meal, the potatoes are chopped up as soon as they are half-boiled, and the best of the redworms and brandlings are picked out, and put to scour in moss for hook-

baits. As soon as the ground-bait is ready we go down to the lake, divide our worms over two of the swims near the bank, adding a few balls of the bread ground-bait as we have hardly enough worms, and throw the last of our bread ground-bait—about 1 gal.—into the other two swims. To bait the holes near the centre of the pond we get into the punt, and throw in nearly 1 gal. of potatoes at two places about 40yds. from the shore, where the carp are usually found. So that we may know exactly where to cast the legers, the keeper pulls up a reed, ties a piece of cotton to the thick end of it, and to the other end of the cotton fastens a small stone. He drops one of these arrangements overboard a few yards beyond each of the potato-baited spots, so that when we cast from the bank in the direction of the reed—which the stone causes to stand upright in the water—we shall, if we go within about 3yds. of it, put the leger in the right place.

Before returning to the shore the keeper draws our attention to the back fins of certain large carp which are showing above the water, near some water-lily leaves about 50yds. off. A small worm, if it could be dangled just over the edge of a water-lily leaf, might be taken by one of those big fellows. I fortunately have a light rod and a Nottingham reel and line with me. It does not take long to straighten out 1ft. of moderately fine gut, and fasten it to the end of the line, also a small Round Bend hook with the shank painted worm colour. A foot above the hook I place two small shot, and thread on just enough of a worm* to cover the hook, leaving the ends dangling. The punt is then backed up very quietly and gently towards the water-lilies, keeping them between us and the fish. After one or two unsuccessful casts I manage to drop the shot on to a solitary leaf, and the worm hangs over the side. We are too near for the fish to take the bait, so I pass the butt of the rod back into the punt, and getting to the top ring, pull line off the reel as the keeper very quietly rows the punt away from the water-lilies. When some 20yds. or so away we stop. After about five minutes the shot are slowly pulled off the leaf, and I know that a fish

* A green pea is a good bait for this method of fishing.

has the bait. I strike, and soon have the satisfaction of landing a fine carp, as big or as little as you like to imagine. Some people might have said that the game was not worth the candle but overcoming one of these most cunning fish, by means however elaborate, gives most anglers the keenest satisfaction. Before leaving the lakeside, we plumb the spots we are going to fish from the bank, and mark the depths on our rods.

On reaching the house we prepare our tackle—several 2yd. lengths of fine, round, strong gut (which we put in soak), stained a pale weed-green (see page 23), and some hooks—No. 8 Round Bend for worms, No. 9 Round Bend with a shorter shank for the paste. The shanks are coloured red and white respectively (see page 20). The gut of the hooks is stained a mud colour, as near the colour of the bottom as we can get it. Before going to bed we put up our rods and lines, take the gut out of soak, loop on the hook, catch the hook in the reel, and wind up tight. Keeping the line stretched on the rod all night will cause it to be quite straight in the morning. We should not catch a fish if it were in curls, or even in waves. My friend puts on a very small, self-cocking float; I prefer a small, dry twig of dead wood, which will look more natural on the surface of the water. I say this having a lively recollection of certain roach which were in shallow water, and absolutely refused to feed until I took all the shot off my line, and replaced the float with a small twig. We hope to do without shot to-morrow.

The following morning at daybreak, fortified by some rum and milk—nauseous but admirable mixture—we steal down to the lake, each with a camp-stool and two pegs cut thus—Y_A B_B, to hold the rod, the butt of which goes over A and under B. Our floats are at the right depth—i.e., 12in. farther from the hook than the water is deep, so that 12in. of gut will lie on the bottom.* Very quietly and gently we steal to our respective pitches, put the pegs in the bank 1ft. apart, the Y-shaped one nearest the water, bait our hooks—the one with paste, the other with a redworm—and cast out our lines as gently as possible. Then we adjust the butts of the rods on the pegs (a heavy

* Some carp-fishermen keep their bait a foot from the bottom. This plan should be tried when the other proves unsuccessful.

metal reel will sometimes weigh down the butt of the rod, and render the f-shaped peg unnecessary), throw in a few worms over the worm-bait, and a few fragments (not lumps) of bread ground-bait, freshly made that morning, around the hook baited with paste, and retire a few yards from the bank, to sit on our camp-stool and await developments. My friend's float moves first; carp bite slowly, and it is not until he sees his float sailing away that he takes up his rod and strikes. Then I get a fish, and by carefully playing all we hook, and by not over-feeding, we keep on catching large carp at intervals of half an hour until 8 o'clock. Then a breeze springs up which blows our floats about, and causes the baits to drag. We are then obliged to put some shot on our lines (more or less according to the force of the wind) 12in. from the hook, so that they just rest on the bottom. About 9 o'clock the fish leave off biting, and we catch nothing more until the evening, and not much then. Of course, when the fish left off biting at one swim we tried another.

There is little more to be added on the subject of float-fishing for carp; minute attention to detail is all-important. The tackle should be as fine as can safely be used. If weeds are abundant, and the fish run large, it should be stronger than if the fish are small and the bottom clear. A Nottingham line, rather stouter than that used for chub, is first-rate for carp fishing. Twisted lines are stronger than those which are plaited. Float-tackle can be got out some distance from the bank by following the directions given on page 45.* After the morning part of the float-fishing was over, we put some more potatoes (but a less quantity than before) into the holes where we intended to leger. The following day we try

Legering for Carp, hoping to catch some of the fathers of the flock. My friend still uses his Nottingham line, casting his leger from the reel; but I prefer a fine, dressed silk line, and cast the leger Thames fashion, coils of line lying on the grass at my feet; and by this means I certainly cast with

* If the float-tackle is too light for long or accurate casting, a small piece of rather stiff ground-bait can be squeezed on round the shot. When paste-fishing, it is not altogether a bad plan to squeeze some soft ground-bait round the paste. The hook-bait then appears to the fish to be a portion of—in fact, the very kernel of—the ground-bait.

greater accuracy than my friend. For hooks we use small triangles, and bait them by passing the loop of the hook-link through a lump of half-boiled potato, or a small, new potato, by means of a baiting-needle (see Fig. 36), burying the triangle right in the potato. Our legers are made according to the directions on page 27; but the gut below the lead is stained to match the colour of the bottom as nearly as possible. Our leger leads have to be rather heavy, as we have a long way to cast. If we had a less distance to cast, a small pistol-bullet would do. Having cast out the leger, we take the check off the winch, put

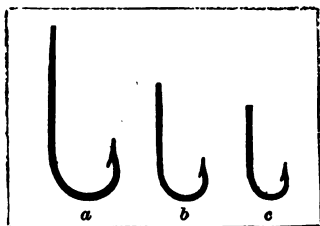


FIG. 36. BAITING-NEEDLE.

the rod in the forked sticks as before, wind up the line taut, and wait until we see the line drawn off the reel, when we at once strike. It is better to lay down the rod than to hold it: If held in the hand, the rod is bound to shake a little, and give a quivering motion to the line, which is, no doubt, observed and appreciated by the fish. The carp bites slowly; with quicker-biting fish it is better to hold the rod. The result of our legering is only four fish, but they are very large ones. We should, no doubt, have caught more but for the splash made by our heavy leads.

Carp-fishing is not a branch of the sport which I can recommend to beginners—it is too discouraging. Success depends, in a great measure, on the angler keeping the carp in absolute ignorance of his presence, on judicious ground-baiting, and on presenting the bait to the carp in such a way that they have no reason to suppose there is any connection between it and a human destroyer of fish.





TENCH HOOKS (actual size).—*a*, for large lobworm twisted round hook; *b*, for lobworm hooked by head or middle; *c*, for paste or small worms.

CHAPTER X.

THE TENCH (*Tinca vulgaris*).

Habits and Haunts—Raking a Pond—River Tench—Baits and Ground-baits—Legering and Float-fishing.

TENCH are handsome fish, which are more often found in ponds and lakes than in rivers. They are common enough in England, less common in Ireland, and not often met with in Scotland. In shape they are not unlike carp, but differ from them in many other respects. Their scales are so small as to be almost invisible, and they are covered with a thick coating of tenacious slime. The back and sides of tench are a golden olive-green; eyes small, and ruby red, and fins dark. At each side of the mouth is a very small barbule. Tench live an extraordinary length of time out of water, and are, perhaps, more tenacious of life than any other fish. They are sometimes taken as heavy as 6lb., and there is one of 11lb. on record; but a 4lb. tench is always looked upon as a large fish of its kind. In the Upper Thames tench run large. Seven I caught one summer at Pangbourne averaged 3lb. each. Very fine tench are also taken out of the Hampshire Avon.

Fishing for Tench in Rivers, so far as my experience goes, is not much use unless the water is coloured and the swim well baited with worms. The most likely swims are near the bank, just where the mud, weeds, and water-lilies end and the gravel begins; and if there is a lot of roots and branches of trees in the water, so much the better. Tench are also found in the

large eddies, where the water is deep and the bottom muddy. In ponds tench bite freely at times, but are very uncertain in their feeding. The best fishing is had in the spring and summer, early in the morning and late in the evening. In rivers, tench are taken in winter if the water is highly coloured and the weather mild. I believe that in stagnant water they invariably bury themselves in the mud when the weather gets cold, but they certainly do occasionally come out to feed.

Tench have extraordinary powers of living in mud, and large fish are frequently taken out of what are little better than mud-holes. In my youthful days I used to fish a small farm horse-pond, which, though shallow and muddy, contained many tench over 11b. in weight. One summer the pond all but dried up, and some gipsies nearly cleared it of tench by means of hay rakes, literally raking the fish out of the mud.

All the tench I have tasted, whether taken in the Thames or in muddy ponds, have been excellent eating, and well flavoured. The slime should be scraped off before the fish are cooked. If the fish from any pond are bad flavoured—and I have heard of such—they might be improved by being placed in a hamper moored in a stream, or, failing the stream, in a vessel of water placed under a tap left running.

The best baits for tench are worms—redworms and brandlings in summer when the water is bright, lobworms in winter, or at any time when the river is coloured. Paste made of stale brown bread and honey (mentioned by Izaak Walton) is also very good. and sometimes wasp-grubs and gentles are used with success. The best ground-baits are worms, when worms are on the hook; bran, brown bread, and potatoes when the brown-bread paste is used; and carrion gentles when wasp-grubs or gentles are the hook-bait. The worm-oil mentioned on page 63 is said to be very attractive for tench, but I have not tried it.

Angling for Tench in Ponds and Lakes is very similar to carp-fishing. The same precautions should be taken, though tench are not quite so shy as carp; nevertheless, it always pays to attend to matters of detail. As a rule, it is best to let the bait lie on the bottom, as in carp-fishing; but occasionally tench seem to take the bait more freely when it only just

touches the bottom. The fish bite best in summer before 9 a.m., and after 7 p.m., and may be taken on a leger long after dark.

River-fishing for tench can be carried on either with a light leger, with the leger float-tackle described on page 47, or with the tight-corking float-tackle, which is very similar (see Chap. V.). Very few shot and small quill floats can be used, as tench-swims are always slow. My Thames experience of tench taught me that it is better to wind the worm round and round the hook, inserting the point at each turn, than to thread the worm on from head to tail. When I threaded the worm, the fish used to take it up, and then, after mouthing it, feel the hook and leave it; but when I surrounded the hook with a thick lobworm I found the bait was not left, so I suppose the hook was not felt. I think it is as well not to strike until the float sails off. I have tried Stewart worm-tackle for tench, but did not find it answer, though it was excellent for roach, chub, and perch. The late Francis Francis advised the angler, when the tench merely played with the worm, to draw the bait very gently away a few inches to bring the coy fish up to the scratch. I have not tried the plan myself.

Another method of baiting, which has been tried with much success, is to use quite a small hook caught once through the head of a lobworm. As I have previously explained, though this plan shows the bait at its best, the worm is liable to crawl under lily roots, stones, &c., and lead to the angler being "hung up," or perhaps I should say down.

I have written but little concerning tench-fishing, because I wish to avoid repetition, and because by perusing the chapters on carp and roach the reader will learn almost all that it is really necessary for him to know, short of actual experience, on the subject.



BREAM HOOKS (actual size).—*a*, for large worms; *b*, for small worms; *c*, for paste.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BREAM (Abramis brama).

Carp Bream—Bream Flat—Habits and Haunts—Making a Night of it—Baits and Ground-baits—Float-fishing and Legering—The Ouse Method—Pond and Lake Fishing.

BREAM are in shape the very opposite of chub, being narrow across the back and shoulders, and round and deep in the belly. There are three known varieties of these fish in the United Kingdom: First, the Pomeranian bream, so rare that I may dismiss him without further notice; second, the carp or golden bream, a fine fish, which grows to 15lb. or more in weight, is often taken weighing 5lb. or 6lb., and abounds in the rivers and broads of Norfolk, in the Eastern counties, and in the lower reaches of the Thames and some of its tributaries; thirdly, the white bream, silver bream, or bream flat, a silvery little fish, which rarely exceeds 1lb. in weight.

Bream spawn in May, or later, and are fished for all through the summer and autumn. They are sometimes taken in winter, when the water is coloured. The favourite haunts of carp-bream in rivers are the deep holes at bends, where the stream is slow, or almost imperceptible. The broad, deep reaches, where the water hardly moves, are usually well stocked with these fish. In ponds, the deepest holes are also the most likely places to find bream. In very large lakes, meres, and broads, it is generally best to fish not too far from the sides, near reed-beds, and in holes among weeds, where the water is from

10ft. to 15ft. deep. At certain times of the day bream rise to the surface and sport, so that, by a very slight strain upon his powers of observation, the angler can easily discover the whereabouts of the fish. When sporting, they of course do not feed on the bottom. It often happens that almost immediately they disappear from the surface the angler begins to catch them.

The great objection I have to bream is the early hour—particularly in rivers—at which they usually breakfast. In most streams no sport worth the name will be had except between 2 p.m. or 3 p.m., and a mortal's breakfast hour. Many bream-fishers make a night of it, going to the river's bank about midnight, and waiting there until the fish come on the feed. And when the bream do "come on," what mighty takes are made! Great fellows, varying from 2lb. to 5lb., take the bait one after another, as fast as the angler will allow them, only stopping when the sun rises well above the tree-tops. Then, weary, with aching back, and a sack half full of fish, the bream-fisher goes home, staggering under his burden. This is no fancy picture. On the Bedfordshire Ouse, men go out night after night and bring home fish which they weigh, not by the pound, but by the stone. Many a time have I met them coming home to breakfast just as I have been starting to fish that glorious river, and now and again have joined them in one of their night attacks on a bream stronghold. In certain streams, to wit the Lower Thames, good baskets of fish are sometimes made in the daytime.

Baits and Ground-baits.—Worms are the very best bait for bream—either a small lob, three redworms, or two brandlings. Boiled wheat (see pages 33 and 42), greaves, gentles, wasp-grubs, caddis baits, and paste, will also take these fish, but are decidedly inferior to worms. For ground-bait, lobworms are best, when obtainable in sufficient quantities (see page 57); failing these, greaves can be tried, or boiled wheat, or a mixture of any of the aforementioned baits, made up into balls with clay or barley-meal. Sheep's blood is supposed to add greatly to the attractiveness of the ground-bait.* No doubt the fish do like

* The following is a nice mixture for ground-bait sometimes used in the Norfolk Broads: One pail fresh (brewers') grains, half pail bullock's blood, half pail clean clay, with a few handfuls of greaves, and a little crushed oilcake. The whole should be made into balls, and dried in the sun.

it, but I have always been satisfied with the sport I have obtained without using it. Potatoes, bread, and pollard, is a good mixture for a pond-fishing. On the Ouse, a very favourite ground-bait is brewers' grains; half a bucketful is thrown in about twenty-four hours before the angling takes place. The remarks on baiting up swims on pages 10, 39, and 62, should be noted, as they apply to all kinds of fish.

Float-fishing and Legering are the two methods by which bream are usually captured. For the deep swims, where the water is almost motionless, there is no better tackle than the combination of float and leger described on page 47. If the swim is very deep, it may be necessary to use a sliding float (see page 26). In the Lower Thames, rather heavy water is fished for bream, for which a leger is best suited. Swims of from 4ft. to 6ft. in depth are best fished with ordinary Nottingham tackle. Bream are not often in such shallow water, but when they are, the angler cannot be too far from them. The way to use this tackle is described on pages 43 and 78.

In night fishing, the angler who uses coarse tackle will catch more fish than he who uses fine, as he can land the fish quicker. The professional bream-fishers of the Ouse use no running tackle, but a long, stout rod, a very large cork float, and a few yards of coarse hemp line, terminated with a few feet of very thick gut. They moor their boat—if they fish from one—in a line with the stream, and stick out two rods with about 2ft. of line between the top of the rod and the float. They plumb the depth, so that 1ft. or more of line rests on the bottom. Their tackle cast out, they put down their rods, and only take them up when they see the heavy float go under. This plan is of very little use in the daytime, but answers well at night, when it is to be presumed the bream cannot see the line. Fine *un*-drawn gut will be found best for bream-fishing, and the running tackle the same as used for chub—if anything, a little stouter. The larger of the two rods described on page 13 answers admirably for carp-bream. If the travelling-float, or Nottingham method is followed, the bait should just trip along the bottom. The size of hook used must, of course, depend on the bait.

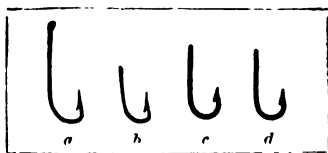
For pond and lake fishing, a very tiny float and one or two

shots are all that is required. A self-cocking float (see page 26) and no shot on the line, is better still *if* the gut can be got to hang quite straight (see page 104). If the tackle has to be cast some distance from the bank, it must, of course, be weighted more heavily, or the leger can be used. The depth of bream swims should never be taken at the time of fishing: the swim should be plumbed the previous day, and the depth marked on the rod.

The bite of a bream is peculiar. After several uneasy movements, the float (unless it is a self-cocking one) lies flat on the surface, and then sails slowly away just under the water. Anglers differ as to the right time to strike. I believe in waiting until the float goes under, but some anglers strike at the moment the float begins to lie over on its side.

These remarks, taken with what I have written concerning fishing with float and leger in previous chapters, are, I think, all that are necessary respecting carp and bream. The white or silver bream is caught in a similar manner, and bites freely—too freely sometimes—on any suitable day. In some of the Norfolk Broads they are so numerous and so hungry as to be a perfect nuisance to the angler who hopes to catch better fish. A certain amount of knowledge of the water is very desirable in bream-fishing, and I would advise anyone, however accomplished, to be not above asking the advice of local fishermen as to the haunts of the fish and their habits.

I must not forget to add—for the comfort of my readers—that if any serious bream-fishing is attempted by the angler who has any regard for his clothes, a kitchen apron should be worn. A towel or duster will be found most useful to wipe the hands on after either baiting the hook or unhooking the fish.



RUDD HOOKS (actual size).—*a*, for gentles cast with fly-rod; *b*, for gentles on float tackle; *c* or *d*, for paste.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RUDD (*Leuciscus erythrophthalmus*).

Habits and Haunts—Tackle and Baits—Flies and Fly-fishing.



DOUBT if there is a more handsome coarse fish than the rudd—

A kind of roach all tinged with gold,
Strong, broad, and thick, most lovely to behold,

as an old writer hath it. Rudd differ from roach in being deeper, more glorious in colouring—resplendent with silver, orange, gold, and red—in the under lip projecting, while that of the roach overhangs; and in the position of the dorsal fin, which begins on the back, slightly behind the anal fin, while in the roach the dorsal fin is almost over the anal fin. The tail is more forked than that of the roach. It has been supposed—wrongly, I believe—that rudd are hybrids between roach and bream.

Rudd sometimes attain a weight of 4lb., but are not often caught over 1½lb. in English waters. Fishing with a fly one summer's morning in Lough Derg, I had the good fortune to take twenty-nine rudd, which weighed exactly 29lb., and among them were several varying from 2½lb. to 3lb. Rudd are called roach in Ireland. They are widely distributed in the United Kingdom, breed prodigiously fast in ponds and lakes, and are also found in many rivers. They are plentiful in the Norfolk Broads, Slapton Ley, several Irish lakes, and in many ponds. There are some in the Thames, but that river cannot suit them, as they do not seem to increase.

Tackle and Baits for Rudd.—Rudd take the same baits as roach, and may be angled for in an exactly similar manner (see Chapter III.), but they do not feed so much on the bottom as roach, nor are they nearly so shy. In ponds I have found paste coloured with red lead a capital bait. I once caught a rudd in the Shannon on a very small perch which I was using as a bait for perch, but the occurrence was decidedly exceptional. Even in well-fished waters these fish are much easier to catch than roach.

The way to obtain the best sport with rudd is to fish for them with an artificial fly. This can only be done when they are shoaling on the shallows, which is usually during hot weather. They can then often be seen moving quietly about with their back fins out of water. They should be very cautiously approached, either by wading, or in a punt or other flat-bottomed craft. The angler should on no account stand up, and should cast as long a line as he conveniently can. I have found the Governor, dressed to Francis Francis' pattern, a very good fly; a moderate-sized red palmer, with a little gold or silver tinsel on the body, is also good. As a matter of fact, rudd are not very particular as to flies. Should artificial flies fail, one or two gentles cast like a fly will often do execution, or the fly can be tipped with a gentle, or may be tied with a short wash-leather or white kid tail. Another good plan is to tie a pair of wings on a sliced hook, and thread a gentle up the bare shank. A few turns of hackle at the head of the fly will do no harm. If a sliced hook is not available, a fine hog's bristle can be bound on to the shank of the hook, which will keep the gentle in its place.

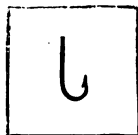
When the fly is cast, it should be drawn slowly through the water towards the angler. If the rudd are on the feed, half a dozen or more fish will follow the fly, making a great wave in the water. The angler should be careful not to strike *until he sees his line commence to tighten*. The fish, when hooked, should be very lightly played, as they have delicate mouths; and care should be taken not to alarm the rest of the shoal.

On large shallow lakes and broads it is sometimes difficult to find the fish. One plan practised with much success is to

row about, distributing fragments of bread. Sooner or later a shoal of rudd comes across the food, and reveals its whereabouts by disturbing the surface as the fish feed. The angler approaches with the boat, moors quietly, and then casts among the fish either a fly, or hook baited with gentles, or very heavy float tackle, the gut below the lead of course being fine. This is cast out in much the same manner as pike-fishers cast out live-bait tackle, and the float is almost as large. Success depends largely on skilful casting and not alarming the fish.

Rudd are not quite such good eating as roach.





BLEAK HOOK (actual size).

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BLEAK (Alburnus lucidus).

Habits and Haunts—How to Preserve for Spinning Baits—Casting a Gentle—How to Clear a Roach Swim—A Hint to Thames Trout-fishers.

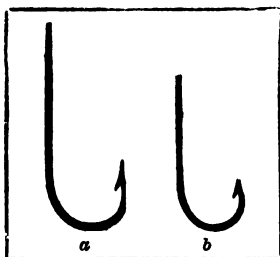
OF the river fish which may be said to afford sport to the angler, the bleak is the most insignificant. In some parts of England it is called a tailor, and it is a curious fact that in the south of Germany it is usually termed a *schneider*. In size and appearance bleak are not unlike sprats, but are more silvery, and when seen in the water have a very beautiful tinge of sea green. They are delicate eating, but are rarely caught for the table, their principal use being as spinning baits for trout and pike.* They are found in most of the English rivers containing coarse fish, and are particularly numerous in the Thames. All through the summer they swim in shoals close to the surface, but in the winter are rarely seen. They do not favour very strong or very shallow swims, and the most certain spots to find them are near overhanging trees, where the stream is gentle, and where, of course, small flies are very plentiful. In roach swims they are often a great nuisance, seizing the bait before it can get down to the roach. I have

* To preserve bleak for winter use, dry them on a cloth, and place them in spirits, in a pickle-bottle. At the end of a fortnight change the spirits. If kept a year or two, they get very tough. I am indebted to Mr. Jardine for the knowledge of the advantage of changing the spirits. The first lot of spirits is full of grease out of the fish, and if the baits are left in it, they lose their brilliancy.

already described the best thing to be done under these circumstances (see page 51).

The most artistic way to angle for these pretty little fish is to cast a caddis bait, or a gentle threaded on to a No. 14 hook as if it were a fly, and allow it to sink, striking immediately the line tightens; or the same tackle, with the addition of the smallest possible float, a foot above the hook, will answer as well, or perhaps better. Bleak may also be caught with a very small artificial fly, but ten will be caught on the gentle to one on the fly. They take paste eagerly, but are not so partial to worms. To bait with the former, roll up a pellet the size of a No. 1 shot and place it on the point of a small roach hook.

It is sometimes so important to catch a few bleak for bait that the following method for finding out their whereabouts is worth noting. Throw a piece of bread into the stream, and watch it. As soon as it floats near a shoal of bleak it will be attacked on all sides, and nearly lifted out of the water. Of course, every angler knows that this happens when bread is thrown in, but they do not always think to try the plan when they are wildly seeking for the baits which are always (why is it?) most difficult to find when most urgently wanted.



EEL HOOKS (actual size).—a, for large baits; b, for small baits.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EEL (*Anguilla vulgaris*).

Habits and Haunts—Improved Eel-spear—Angling for Eels—Bucks and Wheels—Bobbing—Snigglings—Snaring—An Irish Method.

SINCE this book was originally published our knowledge of eels has vastly increased. It is now fairly certain that the broad-nosed eels found mostly near the mouths of rivers are the males, while the larger, pointed-nosed, silver-bellied eels, which descend rivers in large quantities in autumn, are females. It is also certain that eels breed in the sea. From the egg comes a curious ribbon-shaped little creature, which is the eel in its larval stage, and is called a *leptocephalus*. Though the *leptocephali* of many sea-eels have been found in salt water, not a single *leptocephalus* of the fresh-water eel has been found round the British coasts. As a matter of fact, only one example has been discovered, and this was in the Straits of Messina, where the water is of great depth. Owing to the eddying currents, many curiosities of the deep are brought up to the surface, and amongst them was the *leptocephalus* of the fresh-water eel. The ribbon-shaped little creature turns into the small eel or elver, which, in the spring, ascends rivers, the females probably ascending higher than the males. What the large, broad-nosed eels sometimes found high up in rivers are, I cannot say. One ichthyologist suggested that they were sterile females, but their shape points to their being males. Eels do not return from the sea. It has been suggested that

they develop into congers; but this is not very probable, though the conger and fresh-water eel seem closely allied. It is not known for certain if eels spawn in ponds; possibly they do not, reaching and leaving enclosed waters overland in wet weather.

The only times when the angler has a really good chance of catching eels are on dark nights, or in the daytime when the rivers are muddy from heavy rains, or when the air is heavily charged with electricity, as it usually is before and during thunderstorms. Eels are very susceptible to cold, and do not feed or run much in winter, unless the weather is mild or the water highly coloured. Their haunts in summer are under stones, holes in banks, the submerged roots of trees, the crannies in old camp shedding—in fact, any spot affording cover of some kind or another, and particularly those places where food is to be found, such as the outfall of a drain from a slaughter-house. In the spring, about the time the willows bud, they are fond of lying in masses of weed. They may then be speared by plunging the spear into each likely bank of weed. An old couplet runs:

When the willow comes out in bud,
Then the eels come out of the mud.

In the winter they lie in the mud, and are then also speared, often at haphazard; but if the water is clear, the blow-holes of the eels can be seen, and the spear directed accordingly. The best kind of spear is shown in Fig. 37. This pattern spear, which is not generally known, has long been used in the eastern counties.



FIG. 37.
IMPROVED
EEL-SPEAR.

Angling for Eels is best done with a leger (see page 27) baited with a lobworm. A dead minnow threaded on to a hook is also a good bait. In Lancashire, skinned mice and plucked sparrows are considered good baits. The gut should be strong, and the hook a No. 2 Round Bend. A deep, quiet corner in a weir-pool, near old piles and camp shedding, is a capital place to try at night. Give the eel plenty of time to bite, and as soon as you have him in the boat, or on shore, do not hold him up by the line.

but let him drop on the ground or floor-boards of the boat, and at once cut the gut close to his nose. The cook will get the hook out when the eel is dead. It is often less trouble to cut the gut, and put on a fresh hook, than to get out the hook yourself. If you *will* do it, have ready a piece of flannel with which to grasp the eel, or wear a woollen glove on the left hand. To kill the eel, sever his backbone, just behind his head, with a penknife; but first, if you conveniently can, give him a sharp blow on the tail, which will have a very quieting effect. Eels, by-the-way, when in a difficulty—such as a creel—invariably try to get out of it tail first. If you want to get a live eel into a basket, induce his tail to enter the receptacle, and the rest of his body will surely follow. This may seem a contradiction to the previous sentence, but is, nevertheless, correct.

I need hardly say that eels may be caught on float-tackle, or, indeed, on any tackle the angler chooses to use for them, provided the bait lies close to or on the ground, where it can be noticed by the fish. Ground-baiting is not often practised for eels, but long-continued feeding is certain to bring them together in one spot. Blood should be introduced into any ground-bait intended for eels. Fresh rabbits' entrails are said to be wonderfully attractive. There are several

Other Methods of Taking Eels, which can hardly be termed angling, but to which I think I ought to refer. The bulk of the English eels sent to market are caught in nets, or huge baskets, which are set out at openings in weirs, or are placed in narrow side streams, and into which the eels tumble, sometimes in thousands, during their migration seawards. Everyone who has visited the upper Thames must be familiar with the picturesque eel-bucks, as they are termed.

Smaller baskets, called wheels, are laid in spots frequented by eels, and, being baited with gudgeon or other small fish, or offal, are entered by the eels when searching about for food.

Long lines arrayed with any number of hooks, from two to two hundred, are also used for taking eels; but as they prove deadly to every kind of fish, unless baited with dead minnows or gudgeons (somehow or other the professional fisherman does not use these two baits, though they are quite as good as worms

for eels), I forbear to give any directions as to their use. Too much is known on the subject of night-lines already.

Bobbing, or clod fishing, is rather good fun in its way, provided we can quite make up our minds that worms do not feel. First catch fifty or a hundred lobworms, and, by means of an extra long darning needle, string them through like beads, from tail to head, on a length of worsted, and join the lengths together. When this worm-necklace is several yards long, coil it up into one large coil, about 10in. in diameter, tie a light cord to it, and fasten the other end of the cord to a pole. I am, perhaps, wrong in so pointedly telling the reader to make these preparations, for when a base hireling can be obtained to do the work, his services should certainly be utilised. At a suitable time and place (the latter being where the eels are, the former when the eels are feeding or running), drop the coil of worms in the water, let it just touch the bottom, and wait the course of events. If an eel is about he will bite, and a tug will be felt; then quietly and evenly raise the "clod" of worms out of the water, and, most likely, the eel will be found hanging on, bravely, but foolishly. If you are in a boat, lift him in without letting so much as the tip of his tail touch the side, and drop him into a pail of water. I have seen this plan practised with great success in lakes, at the mouths of small streams, swollen and muddy from the rain.

Sniggling is another queer way of taking eels. It can be followed on hot summer days, when not much else can be done. The tackle consists of a thin stick about 6ft. in length (one end of which turns round like the handle of a walking-stick), a few yards of not too coarse running line, and a stout needle. One end of the line is bound on to the eyed half of the needle in the manner shown in Fig. 38. To use this tackle, the sniggler passes a worm on to the needle, sticks the point of the needle into the bent end of the stick, and then, holding the stick in his right hand and the line in his left hand, he quietly places the worm at the mouths of, and sometimes a little way into, holes

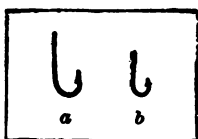


FIG. 38.
SNIGGLING
TACKLE.

in banks, between stones, or cracks in woodwork, or wherever else he thinks an eel is likely to be. As soon as an eel sees the worm, he seizes it, and the needle comes out of the stick. The stick is then removed, and at the end of a minute or two the sniggler pulls the string, and the needle shifts across the poor eel's throat. Then comes a case of pull eel pull sniggler; but the latter usually has the best of it—not through any great display of force, but by keeping up one firm steady pull, which is the great secret of getting eels from their strongholds, both in salt water and fresh. Another plan is to stick 6in. of wire, about as thick as a darning needle, into the end of a straight stick, turn the wire at right angles, and insert the end of it in the head of the worm. Possibly this is the better plan, as the eel can draw the worm off the wire easier than it can pull the needle out of the stick. Of course, the needle is in the worm in both methods.

Not long since, I was told that eels may be snared when the water is very clear and their blow-holes can be seen in the mud. A fine wire noose (softened by being burnt in hay and allowed to cool slowly) is fastened to the end of a stick, and laid exactly over the hole. An assistant then prods the mud just behind the hole with a sharp pointed stick, and, if he goes to work skilfully, wakes up the eel, which puts its head out to see what is the matter. Sometimes the eel is through the noose and away before the snarer has time to jerk up the stick. The operation must require some skill and practice.

Yet another method of taking eels and this chapter is finished. One hot summer's day, I took off my shoes and stockings and joined some juvenile Patlanders, who were turning over large stones which lay in a foot or two of water on the side of a large lake, and stabbed, or tried to stab, the eels, which were underneath, with a kitchen fork, before the poor things had time to scuttle away. Great fun it was too. I believe I caught one eel in about an hour.



SMALL FRY HOOKS (actual size).—*a*, general utility ; *b*, for minnow

CHAPTER XV.

SMALL FRY.

Minnow (Leuciscus phoxinus)—*Stone Loach or Colloch (Nemacheilus barbatula)*—*Ruffe or Pope (Acerina vulgaris)*—*Miller's Thumb or Bullhead (Cottus Gobio)*—*Stickleback (Gasterosteus)*.

THE first two fish coming under the term small fry are most useful as bait for trout, perch, and, occasionally, for pike and salmon.

Minnows are found in very many of the brooks and rivers of the United Kingdom. They rarely exceed 3½ in. in length, and in shape and colouring are not unlike a brown trout without the red spots. In the spring, about spawning time, they put on most gorgeous hues. They are found in shallow water. In winter, they leave the rivers to escape the floods, and crowd into ditches and drains. For their wholesale capture for bait, I have given directions on pages 66 and 67. They are easily caught with rod and line, provided the hook is small enough. It frequently happens that hooks of the requisite degree of smallness are not kept in stock at the tackle-shops. The line cannot be too fine, the float too small, nor the fragment of worm on the hook too fragmentary. The angler has only to walk along the river's bank until he sees the minnows, cast in his tackle (first adjusting the float so that the worm escapes the bottom), and success is certain. Minnows are by no means bad eating if cooked *à la* whitebait.

The Stone Loach, or Colloch of Ireland, sometimes also called the colley-bait, lives for the most part under stones in

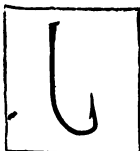
many of our rivers and brooks, and in a few ponds and lakes. It somewhat resembles the gudgeon in size and colour, but has not the transparent appearance of that excellent little fish. Its nose, also, is much more pointed, and its mouth is adorned with six to ten feelers, or barbules. It is easily captured, the *modus operandi* being to turn over a stone, and catch the shy little fish with the hand, or in a hand-net, or by means of a fork, on which latter method Mr. Blackmore has written charmingly in "Lorna Doone." Loaching requires a certain amount of activity, and is not a suitable amusement for middle-aged gentlemen of majestic proportions. When the stone is turned over, the loach wriggles rather than swims to another hiding place, and if the loacher fails in his first attempt, the loach generally gives him a second opportunity. When loach lie under flat-bottomed stones, a tap with a hammer on the top of the stone will often stun the loach, and conduce to his capture. I have heard that loach may be taken with float tackle and a worm, but have never tried the experiment. Loach are most excellent eating, and are one of the best spinning baits for salmon and large trout.

The Ruffe, or Pope, is a sweet-eating little fish, which rarely exceeds 3oz. or 4oz. in weight. It is a member of the perch family, and is shaped almost exactly like the common perch, but is marked and coloured very much like a gudgeon. It takes the usual perch baits with avidity, and may be easily taken on light gudgeon-tackle baited with worms. It will usually be found in more quiet swims than those frequented by gudgeon, and rather on the edge of the stream than in it. When caught, it should be handled with care, as the gill-covers are pointed, and can inflict unpleasant wounds. It gives off a nasty slime when handled. Pope are river fish, but are occasionally found in lakes.

The Miller's Thumb, or Bullhead, is a monstrosity among fresh-water fish, four-fifths of its body being a flat, sprawling head, likened, probably, to the miller's thumb because that useful member of the man of flour is supposed to spread from constantly feeling samples of meal. Miller's thumbs (the fish) are found principally under stones in rivers and brooks, and

occasionally, in shallow water. They eat almost everything eatable that is not too large for them to swallow, and I have heard that they are not bad eating themselves. Village urchins sometimes angle for these peculiar beings by placing a hook baited with a worm right under the stone where a bullhead is lying. The better plan is to lift up the stone, and extract the bullhead with the hand before he has time to flee.

The Stickleback.—Of these ubiquitous little fish there are six varieties. They are all more or less armed with bony plates along their sides, and spines on back and belly. They are found in almost every ditch, river, and lake in the United Kingdom, and rarely exceed 1½ in. in length. In rivers, they live for the most part out of the stream—on muddy shallows. They are interesting fish to keep in an aquarium, building a kind of nest, in which the female deposits her eggs, and at the door of which the male keeps guard. They are as voracious as the bullhead, and are *very* harmful, from the amount of fish spawn and fry which they devour. They are easily caught by means of a worm tied, at the middle, to a piece of cotton. As soon as the stickleback has swallowed half the worm (the proceeding can be watched), pull him up gently. He will not leave go.



FLOUNDER HOOK (actual size)

CHAPTER XVI.

FISH NOT COMMONLY CAUGHT BY FRESH-WATER ANGLERS.

Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*)—*Flounder* (*Pleuronectes flesus*)—*Barbolt or Burbot* (*Lota vulgaris*)—*Azurine Rudd* (*Leuciscus cæruleus*)—*Vendace* (*Coregonus vandesius*)—*Powan or Gwyniad* (*Coregonus clupeoides*)—*Pollan* (*Coregonus pollan*)—*Graining* (*Cyprinus Lancastriensis*).

THE Lamprey is a peculiar, migratory fish, in shape very similar to an eel; but in lieu of a mouth it has a sucking apparatus, with which it holds on to stones at the bottoms of rivers. There are several varieties of this fish, one of which—the sea lamprey—is deemed an edible luxury. The lampern is a small, migratory kind of lamprey, which makes an excellent bait for turbot, and is also used for trailing or whiffing in the sea. It is sometimes taken by trout, chub, barbel, and eels. A small variety of lamprey, termed the pride or mud lamprey, does not appear to migrate.

The Flounder is a little flat-fish, which is usually found in the brackish water of estuaries, but sometimes makes its way up rivers into perfectly fresh water. It is easily taken on a leger baited with a lobworm, and, indeed, will take most of the baits used by the bottom fisher. It prefers quiet streams, where the bottom is a sandy mud. In estuaries a live sea-shrimp is a good bait. Flounders begin life swimming on edge like roach or bream, with an eye on each side of the head; but in a few

weeks they flap along the bottom on one side like other flat-fish, the under eye working round to the upper side.

The Burbolt, Burbot, or Eel Pout, is, in appearance, something between an eel and a cod-fish. It is rare, except in a few rivers on the East Coast. It sometimes attains a weight of 8lb., though the average weight is about 1½lb. It is the only member of the cod family found in fresh water, and may be known by its solitary barbule, its slender, elongated shape, and long, solitary anal fin. Living mostly on muddy bottoms, and feeding principally at night, it is more often taken in eel-baskets and on night-lines, than by the angler. This fish is fairly good eating during the autumn and winter months.

The Azurine, incorrectly termed the blue roach, is a beautiful and exceedingly rare variety of rudd only found in a few localities. Its back is slate blue, and its belly and fins are white. It has, says Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell, been angled for and caught on carp baits.

The Vendace is a member of the salmon tribe. It has an adipose fin, and breeds in autumn and winter. It attains a length of 9in., and is greenish blue or black on the upper half of the body, with belly silver, a glint of gold on sides, and dark fins. This and the three following fish are very similar in appearance, and are sometimes called fresh-water herrings. The vendace is found in certain lakes near Lochmaben, Dumfriesshire, in Derwentwater and the Bassenthwaite Lakes. It is only to be taken in nets. An interesting account of the vendace appeared in the *Edinburgh Journal of Natural and Geographical Science*, and in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*. Extracts from these articles will be found in Keene's "Practical Fisherman."

Powan are silvery little members of the salmon tribe, which are found in great numbers in Loch Lomond, and, doubtless, in some other large lakes. There is no record, so far as I know, of these fish having been taken by the angler.

The Pollan, also a member of the salmon family, is very similar to the powan. Tons of these fish are netted in some of the large Irish lakes during the year, and sent to England, where they are sold as "Irish grayling." The pollan grows to

about 10in. or 12in. in length, swims in shoals, and is supposed to feed on fresh-water shrimps. It will occasionally take the artificial fly. When swimming near the surface, a shoal of these fish will cause a peculiar ripple in the water. Once, after vainly fishing one of these ripples with a fly, I fired a small shot-gun at the edge of the shoal, and picked off a solitary fish. It ate very like a herring, but was more delicate, and less oily. A fine line, baited with fresh-water shrimps, and buoyed with small fragments of cork, might, very likely, take pollan when they are swimming near the surface.

The Gwyniad is a member of the salmon tribe, so like the powan, pollan, and vendace, as to have been supposed, by some naturalists, to be identical with them. It is found in several of the Cumberland lakes, and in Wales. There is, I believe, no known method of catching this fish with hook and line.

The Graining is an exceedingly rare variety of dace, being only found in the Mersey, the Alt (Lancashire), the Leam, at Leamington, and some streams in the townships of Burton Wood and Sankey. It is said to be somewhat like a dace, but with a more rounded nose; the upper part of the head and body is drab tinged with red; the cheeks and gill-covers are a silver yellowish-white, and the fins are a pale yellowish-white. The graining rises to a fly, but the redworm is a more killing bait. Yarrell's specimens of graining in the British Museum are, so the late Dr. Day told me, undoubted examples of dace.

In addition to the above, there is a sea-fish—the **Shad**—which visits a few of our rivers for a short time in the spring months, for spawning purposes. There are two varieties of this fish found off the British coasts—the twaite and allice shall. I consider shad excellent eating. They have a distinct salmon flavour. In the Severn they take a large dark fly, or better, the so-called grasshopper bait, which is used for grayling. A friend fishing with me caught one on a mackerel laske off Brighton in 1898.

I have given but scanty information in this chapter, for the simple and all-sufficient reason that the fish mentioned are of small account to anglers. All the British coarse fish have now been treated of, the pike excepted, to which most sport-giving fish the second division of this work is devoted.

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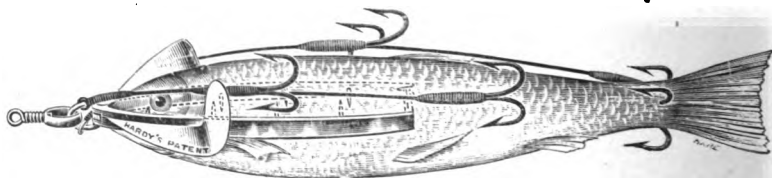
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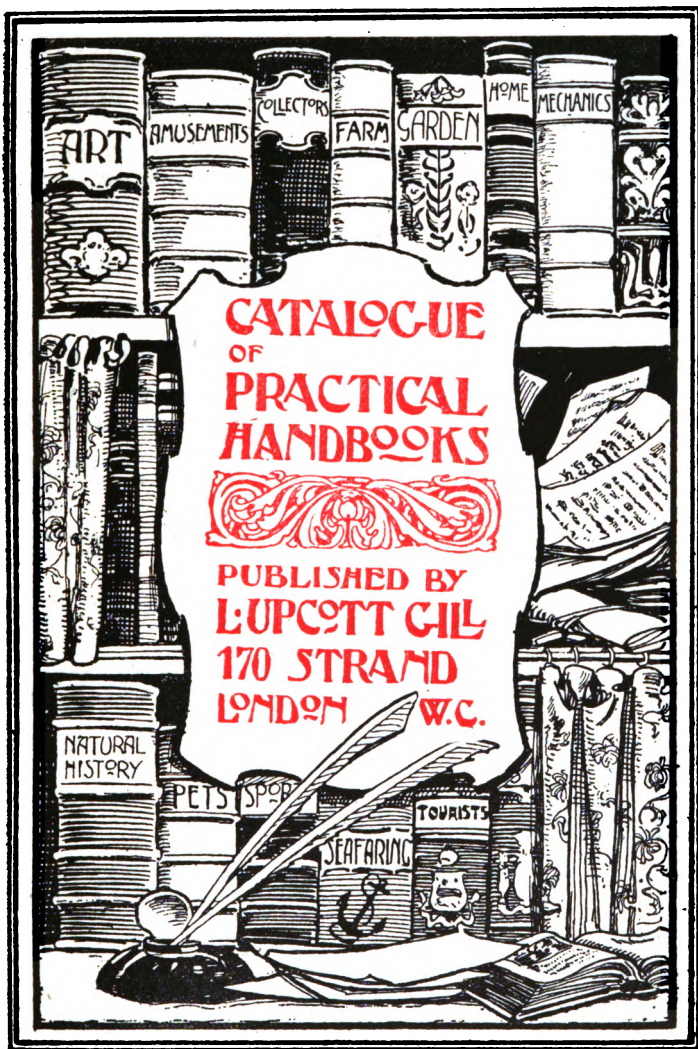
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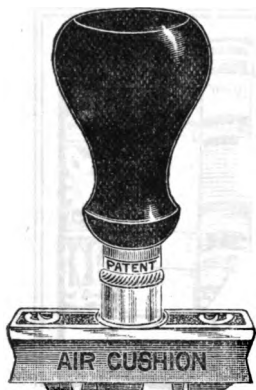
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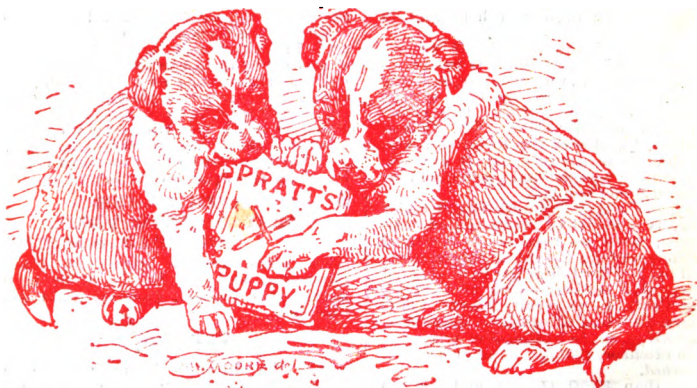
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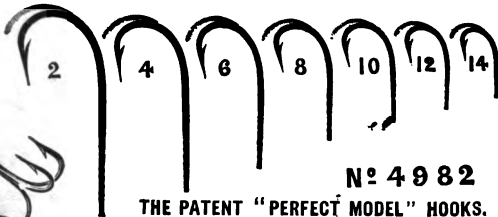
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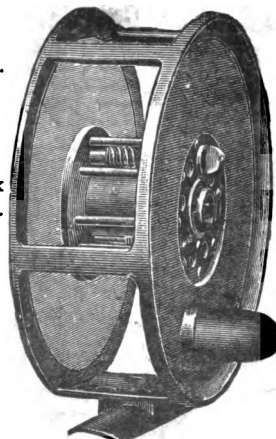
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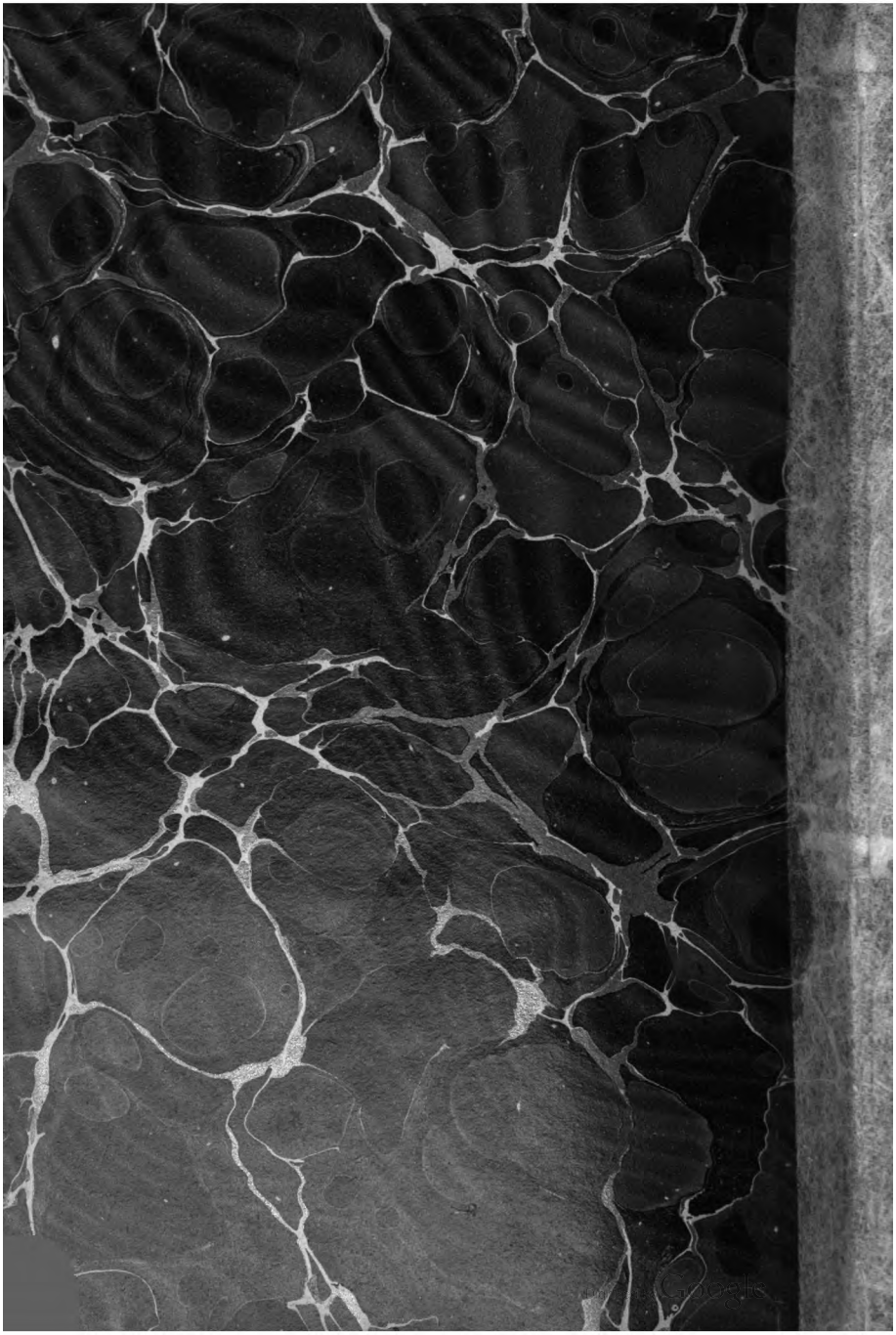
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